

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY OF THE  
NETWORKED PUBLICS IN THE AYOTZINAPA TWITTER PROTESTS  
#PASEDELISTA1AL43

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A dissertation  
presented to  
the Faculty of Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
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May 2018

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**CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY OF THE  
NETWORKED PUBLICS IN THE AYOTZINAPA TWITTER PROTESTS  
#PASEDELISTA1AL43**

presented by Rocio Araceli Galarza Molina,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy of communication,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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## DEDICATION

To the missing.  
And to those who relentlessly look for them, whatever the means.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Ayotzinapa case is a topic I wish I did not have to write about. The disappearance of the 43 students is heartbreaking. Yet, I am inspired by the people that participate in the protest I examine here to do my best to contribute to deepen our understanding of ways in which the case can be given the importance and justice it deserves. I hope it does a little. But I did not get here on my own. I had lots of love and academic guidance to accomplish this dissertation.

To Brian Houston: I consider myself fortunate to have had you as my advisor during this significant and challenging stage of my life. Your guidance was encouraging and caring while at the same time giving me the freedom to be who I am as a graduate student and as a scholar. You were always a source of calm rather than a source of stress during this process. Thanks to your advice and help I never left a meeting with you feeling stressed but quite the opposite: I always felt at ease and confident in what I had to do next to accomplish whatever task was in front of me. I think this all makes you an advisor unicorn or at least one of the chillest/coolest advisor ever. Thank you!

To my committee members, Lissa Behm-Morawitz, Amanda Hinnant, and Ryan Thomas: Thank you for your contribution to accomplish this goal and for your supportive spirits throughout this process. Lissa you are incredibly smart and equally kind. With you being DGS and with all the classes I took with you (ALL that were available during my time here) I consider you as a second advisor and will value all your guidance endlessly. Amanda Hinnant, thanks for your brilliance and for the absolute best qualitative methods class I have ever taken. I can only hope I will ever be as good as a professor as you are. To Ryan Thomas, thank you for your kindness and for your thoughtful comments about

my work. One of the most valuable opportunities I had at Mizzou was to be able to learn your perspective on journalism and media (I am a big fan!). It has enriched my own perspective and I will take that on my work as a scholar forever.

To all my friends from the Comm department, thanks for all the fun and growth we experienced together. Astrid, thank you for sharing with me what your PhD process was as an outsider. It helped me to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Big Gracias! Leslie and Joel: this just became so much easier once I found my people. Love you!

Thank you to my forever academic crew. To my dear college professors, José Ruiz and Cintia Smith: You saw a place for me in academia before I realized that this was what I wanted to do. Thank you for suggesting me to pursue this career and for being examples to aspire to. To Ana and Bertha, I love your minds and souls, my friends.

To my parents: Thanks for our family. For all the love. And for the exciting lunch conversations, for the books, for the dogs, for the movies, for the places, for my wonderful brother (he is ok!). Thanks for instilling in me curiosity and giving me freedom to take my life wherever I wanted to take it. Turns out, I am Dr. Galarza after all.

And to my husband, Jesús Romo: Bird, thanks for moving to this Midwestern branch with me. Thank you for holding me and telling me to take one step at a time when I thought I couldn't do this. Thanks for all the little things you do for me, like giving me water when I am on the couch and don't want to stand up because I am lazy and my computer is on my lap. And for all the big things you've done as well, from moving to Missouri to reading a whole book with me so that I could explain it better in class. Thanks for all the silliness we share along with a monkey, a bat, a seal, and the gang of raccoons that rule this town. You make my life better and happier. I think I kinda like you.

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the networked public that was emergent on Twitter based on analysis of the use of the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* to protest the disappearance of 43 students in Mexico in 2014. As social media have expanded, practitioners of contentious politics have utilized these media for manifesting their claims and organizing. These *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests are explored as a form of performing contentious politics. To address this phenomenon, this project took a mixed methods approach, combining social network analysis and thematic and content analysis of Twitter data and interviews. A total of 3,616 tweets from five different moments in the first two years of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests were collected to examine their content, who their authors are, as well as the relationship between the people in the networked public. Additionally, interviews ( $N = 14$ ) with participants of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests were conducted to delve into protesters' perspectives on the demonstration. Results help elucidate how Twitter can be used to practice contentious politics and thus constitutes another resource in the repertoire for performing contentious politics. Additionally, this study aligns with other research that has identified Twitter as a place for the formation and expression of counterpublics that seek to challenge hegemonic narratives. Moreover, the analyses in this study strengthen our understanding of processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing that occur within a networked public on Twitter. Unlike traditional processes of gatekeeping and framing, networked processes are supported by a symbiotic relationship between elite and non-elite Twitter users. Moreover, frames prevalent in the protest not only concerned facts about the case but also

denoted efforts of the protesters to position themselves in the story of the Ayotzinapa case.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

On September 26<sup>th</sup> of 2014, a group of young students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College were on their way to Mexico City to commemorate the anniversary of the mass killing of students by the Mexican government four decades before. However, the pupils never made it to their destination. Instead, they were attacked by local police, arrested, and disappeared. The students have been missing ever since and the government's investigation into their whereabouts has been criticized by citizens and journalists. The case is called the Ayotzinapa case, in reference to the college that the students came from. The event caused massive outrage among Mexican citizens, a people who over the last decade have suffered from the escalation of drug-related violence in the country and who point to the 43 students' disappearance as the pinnacle of the public safety crisis.

This study examines a daily protest that has occurred on Twitter about the Ayotzinapa case. In the aftermath of the students' disappearance, the event generated widespread political protests in Mexico and was the focus of debate on social media, which were used by citizens to share their discontent about the issue. Among these online discussions, a particular form of demonstration emerged on Twitter, the protest known as *Pase de lista 1 al 43* (Roll call from 1 to 43), which entails a roll call with the names of the students every day at 10:00 pm. The primary hashtag that derives from this *Roll Call* is #PaseDeLista1al43, which is used to invite Twitter users to join in the roll call by retweeting the names of the students. This hashtag also includes messages protesting the Ayotzinapa case or criticizing topics related to current events in Mexico that are perceived as consequence of government negligence or corruption.

These #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests are explored as a form of performing contentious politics, a concept defined as consequential collective claims that seek political or social changes (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2007). Because individuals and social groups have historically sought for these type of changes, contentious politics have always existed in some form, although their specific methods of achieving their ends have evolved (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). As social media have expanded, practitioners of contentious politics have utilized these media for manifesting their claims and organizing. Consequently, scholars have sought to understand the incorporation of these tools for the purpose of contentious politics, particularly in the context of social unrest against political power. The theoretical concept to observe these protests is networked publics, publics that are restructured by networked technologies, which at the same time constitute a space and an imagined collective (boyd, 2010). The public resulting from the use of the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 is a networked public. Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the structure, practices, and motivations of the networked public emerging from the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests to elucidate the role of social media for performing contentious politics.

To address this phenomenon, this project took a mixed methods approach, combining social network analysis and thematic and content analysis of Twitter data and interviews. Tweets from five different moments in the first two years of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests were collected to examine their content, who their authors are, as well as the relationship between the people in the networked public. Additionally, interviews with participants of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests were conducted. In the next chapter, I explain the main concepts that inform this study:

contentious politics, new media and social media, and networked publics. An overview of the Mexican context and of the Ayotzinapa case is provided. Then, the methods implemented are described. Chapter Four presents the results of these analyses. A discussion of the findings is provided on Chapter Five.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

At the core of contentious politics are consequential collective claims that seek political or social changes (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2007). Because individuals and social groups have historically sought for these types of changes, contentious politics have always existed in some form, although individual and collective methods of achieving their ends have evolved (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). Individuals or groups that take part in contentious politics resort to certain tools available to them, known as contentious performances, which as a set are called contentious repertoires. In recent years, new technologies have been commonly discussed in the context of contentious politics, because new media have been utilized for contentious performances such as helping to mobilize citizens to protest online and offline, and, more broadly, to confront government or powerful entities about political issues. Although media has historically played a role in contentious politics, certain affordances of new media, and social media in particular, have caught scholarly attention for their potential to facilitate contentious politics. In the following section, I explain in depth the concept of contentious politics and then address the relationship between contentious politics and new media and social media.

### **Contentious Politics**

The term contentious politics refers to actions in which individuals, groups, or regimes engage in some kind of contestation, controversy, or dispute about political means or ends (Aday et al., 2010). More specifically, contentious politics entails “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, p. 4). In

this sense, contentious politics intersects three features of social life (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). First, the concept relates to politics because it encompasses the participation of government, even if the latter is not the receiver of the claims in question, but a mediator or even the claimant. Second, the definition also entails contention given that the claims, if fulfilled, impact some other actor's interests. Third, contentious politics intersects collective action because its enactment requires organized efforts on behalf of a certain group or cause.

Contentious politics are constituted of relationships (Passy & Monsch, 2013) in which the actors involved are constantly negotiating and collaborating, but also defeating, punishing, blocking each other (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). Though politics are by nature somewhat contentious (Tarrow, 2013), Tilly (2001) points out that much of politics is more likely ceremonial, bureaucratic, and routinized. In turn, contentious politics are characterized by their noninstitutional nature (Tarrow 2013). Yet, the degree to which institutional routines to advance claims are utilized varies depending on the type of contentious politics (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007).

The concepts of social movements and contentious politics are often treated the same, but there are differences between these concepts (Tarrow, 2013; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). Social movements are “sustained challenges to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of public displays of that population’s worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment” (Tarrow, 2013, p. 267). Thus, a social movement is a form of contentious politics, but the latter is a broader term that can include other type of phenomena ranging from sustained struggles (e.g., revolutions or episodes of democratization) to shorter and more narrow conflicts

(e.g., riots and strike waives) (Tarrow, 2013; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). At the same time, contentious politics can also intersect with traditional politics, like elections and interests groups (Tarrow, 2013). Therefore, even though in recent years the study of digital technologies and new media for political protesting and demonstrations has often been analyzed in relation to social movements (e.g., Garrett, 2006; Gleason, 2013; Harlow, 2011; Harlow, 2013; Lefebvre & Armstrong, 2016; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002), contentious politics is a more comprehensive term to understand the particular phenomenon investigated in the current study. Likewise, collective action, which has also been recently investigated in connection with new media (e.g., Bennett, 2012; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011; Soon & Kluver, 2014; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002), is only one aspect that constitutes contentious politics, whereas the latter concept is more extensive and fitting to discuss the coordinated use of social media with a confrontational purpose against political power, as this study intended.

In contentious politics, the standardized ways in which collective claims are made are called contentious performances, and include, for example, demonstrations, rallies, petitions, statements to the media, pamphleting, and boycotts. These performances accumulate to constitute contentious repertoires, the arrays of performances “that are known and available for a set of political actors” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, p.11) when they want to oppose a public decision considered unjust or threatening (Della Porta, 2013). As mass media became prevalent during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of people who could witness contentious claims expanded. Similarly, in recent years, as new technologies have become available, Internet has been utilized for contentious politics mobilization (e.g., via email or social media) and for disruption (e.g., through hacktivism) (Tilly &

Tarrow, 2007). Reflecting on current contested issues on the study of the topic of contentious politics, Tarrow (2013) questions how these new digital forms of collective action challenge existing approaches to contentious politics. This study aims to contribute to understanding Tarrow's question, focusing on the use of one particular form of technology, the social media platform Twitter, as part of a contentious politics scenario. In the following section, I discuss the relationship between new media and contentious politics. Prior to that discussion, I explain concepts that are pertinent to understand for addressing such relationship: new media, social media, and Twitter.

### **New Media and Contentious Politics**

**New media.** New media and traditional media differ in significant ways. Traditional media have largely utilized a mass media model that creates and distributes content in a one-to-many pattern. Print publications such as newspapers and magazines, and broadcast outlets such as radio and television are forms of traditional media, in which production and distribution rests on the hands of few individuals and institutions to be delivered to large audiences. In turn, new media generally utilize digital technology “through the production and processing of numerical (predominantly binary) code” (Gane & Beer, 2008, p. 5). New media allow the publication and dissemination of digital content that can be stored and accessed on a digital network or using a digital device (Skoric & Poor, 2013). According to Gane and Beer (2008), four important features of digital content affect the way digital information or digital data are produced, reproduced, and transmitted. First, digital content is manipulable because its underlying code can be altered (e.g., information in a word processor can be easily corrected or changed). Second, new media are connected through networks that cover vast geographical regions

and therefore, digital content can be shared easily and accessed simultaneously by many people. Third, digital data are dense, and lastly, they are also highly compressible. These two features facilitate the transmission of huge digital files through networks, all squeezed in small physical spaces. New media content production is thus highly decentralized because its creation is not exclusive to few media institutions or powerful individuals but it is spread across larger masses of people with access to digital tools (e.g., networked computers or devices) and who possess certain digital skills. For this reason, the distribution of new media content follows a many-to-many pattern as opposed to the few-to-many pattern of traditional media (Skoric & Poor, 2013).

Thanks to these characteristics, new media fosters peer-to-peer communication, reciprocity, and horizontal participation among its users (Jenkins, 2006). That is, new media can be utilized to connect users with each other (peer-to-peer communication) and to potentially allow users to develop a sense of closeness with other individuals regardless of their geographical location (Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013; Stromer-Galley & Wichowski, 2011). Additionally, when using digital tools users can become involved with each other and denote reciprocity in their exchanges (Stromer-Galley & Wichowski, 2011) by explicitly manifesting a reaction to what the other users expresses responding in different manners. This can occur not only when replying to a message with another message, but also by manifesting presence and support to others through interactive cues (e.g., with likes, retweets, or shares). These cues can help foster identification with others as they can increase a sense of immediacy and trust (Harlow, 2011). Moreover, the many-to-many pattern of production and distribution foments a more horizontal participation

from users, because the opportunities to contribute with one's own ideas and content have wider reach.

Unlike traditional media's centralized form of production, new media allows citizens to create, appropriate, and recirculate content, working around hierarchical control to navigate through networks (Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013). These new possibilities have facilitated conditions for users to develop a sense of empowerment because they can now participate in the production and dissemination of content and thus, share their ideas. As a result, the accumulation of user-generated content may lead to the emergence of collective intelligence that can function as an alternative source, parallel to other centers of power such as traditional media (Jenkins, 2006). In this sense, the development of more communication channels has expanded the range of voices that can be heard, to the point where no voice is likely to have unquestioned authority (Jenkins, 2006). Moreover, voices that typically have had a difficult time finding an outlet for expression have been able to use new media to their advantage because they have been able to utilize them to share their viewpoints. The transmission of information is now lower cost and requires less effort (Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang, & Bae, 2014) due to widely expanded digital communication networks. In consequence, lay individuals who are not part of traditional centers of power (i.e., non-members of the political elite or of traditional media organizations), but who have access to new media can potentially disseminate information, help set the public's and media's agenda of issues, and present, through different frames, alternative realities to those utilized by traditional media sources (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2013). Under these circumstances, opportunities to communicate have multiplied for minority or dissident voices, thus strengthening these

actors' capacity to influence the political arena by making their discourses accessible and more visible. In this way, the use of new media can potentially expand what is considered acceptable in the public discourse (Bennett, 2012; Soon & Kluver, 2014).

**Social media.** A popular form of new media in the last two decades that has been associated with politics of contention are social media, “platforms and services that offer users the opportunity to publish content, to connect with other people, and to engage in conversation” (Houston et al., 2014). On these web-based services, also known as social network sites, users construct profiles and a list of friends (composed of other users of the system) that is publicly available, to enable users to traverse the site’s network by clicking through other users’ friends lists (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Despite differences in user interfaces or focus (e.g., social or professional purposes), Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and LinkedIn are all examples of social media platforms. Social media commonly provide users certain tools to acknowledge each other publicly and to establish public, semi-public, or private interactions (boyd, 2010). As such, social media platforms enable self-presentation and connection-building (Papacharissi, 2009). These characteristics of social media are significant as they denote a shift in the organization of online communities to be primarily constructed around people and not around interests (boyd & Ellison, 2008), hence making the individual represented in the consciously-crafted profile the locus of the interaction (boyd, 2010). Social media users can sustain pre-existing offline relationships or establish new ones with people they meet exclusively online (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Concerning contentious politics, like the present work, several studies (e.g., Lefebvre & Armstrong, 2016; Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013; Papacharissi, 2014; Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2012; Segerberg & Bennett,

2011) have focused on the role of one particular social network site, Twitter, in facilitating contentious politics. The characteristics of the Twitter social media platform are discussed next.

**Twitter.** Twitter is a microblogging platform in which users create individual profiles. The main activities of Twitter users are posting messages (tweeting) of up to 280 characters—extended from the original 140 characters limit—that may or may not include images, videos, or links to other pages; viewing the posts of other Twitter users; and re-posting tweets composed by others (retweeting) so that their own followers can read those posts (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). On Twitter, an individual is connected to others via relationships formed when following other users, thus exposing oneself to the messages tweeted or retweeted by the people one follows (Himelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013). The length of Twitter messages satisfy a need for a fast mode of communication, since it may require less time and thought investment for the generation and consumption of messages (Java, Song, Finin, & Bell, 2007), resulting in the emergence of a fast-paced conversation environment (boyd, Golder, & Lotar, 2010). Although the tweet length restriction may limit the depth of the messages, it can also make them more concise (Himelboim et al., 2013). Additionally, since Twitter users can interact with individuals, groups, and the public at large, the conversations that occur on this platform can be experienced by broader audiences and not just those who are directly involved in the interactions (boyd et al., 2010). Furthermore, in contrast to some other social networks, Twitter allows any user to follow any other, without a need for reciprocation (i.e., an individual can follow another user's account even if that user does

not follow her back) (Gilpin, 2011). This Twitter feature expands the amount of people a user can interact with.

Beyond the construction of the short messages known as tweets, the distinct features of the Twitter platform have led to the development of its own conventions for communication, following its own media logic, shapes, and structure (Hermida, 2010). Thusly, people use mentions, adding the @ symbol besides a username to address others directly to claim their attention to the message or to start conversations; in turn, the reply function is used to follow up on a conversation (boyd et al., 2010). The retweet feature in the platform has also evolved, now allowing the individual doing the retweet to include additional comments to the original post (Mangalindan, 2015). Besides the spread of thoughts, retweets can be used as a form of endorsement for a message or to manifest one's presence as a listener (boyd et al., 2010). Yet, the comments added when retweeting can be in agreement or disagreement to the original post. A derivation of the retweet function is the use of the word *via* before a tweet, which pays attribution to the source of the content without retweeting the actual original tweet (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Hashtags formed with the # symbol and keywords are utilized to organize Twitter messages by topic (boyd et al., 2010), enabling users to start “spontaneous interpersonal conversations or social awareness streams, deviating from the organizational logic of mainstream media news feeds” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 140). Additionally, the short length restriction has made common the use of hyperlinks to direct to additional information on the Internet (Himelboim et al., 2013).

These different practices contribute to a conversational ecology where discussions distributed across the network “are composed of a public interplay of voices that give rise

to an emotional sense of shared conversational context” (boyd et al., 2010, p. 1). Even though Twitter users inhabit a multiplicity of loose conversations, they can be aware of these discussions’ content regardless if they contribute to them or not (Hermida, 2010). An analysis of the intentions that Twitter users have for tweeting showed that the main reasons users tweet are: for daily chatter, for conversations, for sharing information, and for reporting news (Java et al., 2007). Regarding the last two, it must be noted that Twitter has been adopted by news media outlets to share breaking news, and at the same time, it has also been considered in the context of citizen journalism, as lay Twitter users have utilized the platform to share their personal accounts of events through text, photo, and video (Hermida, 2010). Therefore, these Twitter news streams –understood as awareness systems to collect, communicate, and share information (Hermida, 2010)— result from the contribution by different actors that introduce hybridity to the news system (Papacharissi, 2014).

These new possibilities resulting from the Twitter platform have been of particular importance for contentious politics, as citizens have utilized digital devices and resources to organize, communicate their ideas, and share information about their actions (Harlow & Guo, 2014; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Yet, the extent of new media’s potential for such purposes has been a subject of debate. From the different social revolts against authoritarian governments during the Arab Spring, to the Spain Indignados and Occupy Wall Street movements, to the Ferguson protests, to consumer boycotts of corporations, scholars have investigated the incorporation of new media instruments for contentious politics.

**Social media use in contentious politics.** Responding to optimistic perspectives in news media that have even pointed to the possibility of “Twitter revolutions” (Keller, 2010), academia has interrogated whether social media technologies cause, enable, facilitate, or empower social movements. However, while social media have been increasingly utilized in a wide range of scenarios (e.g., Tunisian revolution, Black Lives Matter protests), the debate about causal direct effects of these technologies on contentious politics has been described by some as meaningless because it is “obvious” that “neither the Internet, nor any other technology for that matter can be a source of social causation” (Castells, 2012, p. 229). Multiple social and political factors lead to the emergence of social movements or situations of political contention in different contexts. Similarly, when high expectations for political, legislative, and systemic change emerge because of the speed and spreadability of information about a movement or cause, and then such transformations do not occur, “it is not social media that have misled us, it is our own expectations that have let us down” (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 321).

Therefore, a starting point to look into the role of social media for contentious politics is to abandon broad assumptions and generalizations about the impact that social media usage can have on societies’ proclivity to fight for the improvement of political and social conditions, and on their ability to effect such changes. Abstracting social media instruments from their more complex contexts constitutes an analytical fallacy that places “an undue burden of expectations (e.g., to cause revolutions) on what is just one of many factors in the contemporary political communication and organization repertoire” (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011, p. 200). Instrumentalist approaches about media ignore the complexities of media use and the broader contexts in which media practices develop,

and thus what people do with social media is as important as what people do on the spaces that social media afford (Zayani, 2015). Far from being neutral tools, social media are assemblages articulated and redefined by the combination of “software processes, patterns of information circulation, communicative practices, social practices, and political contexts” (Poell, 2013, p. 717).

Bearing in mind this key distinction, it is worth asking then what is the role that social media can have for contentious politics because whereas some may argue the debate about causation is meaningless (Castells, 2012), the potential for social media technologies to enable, facilitate, or empower political actors can be meaningful. Although technologies are not essential for the development of social movements, communication is indeed a crucial element because feelings of connection and togetherness among its members, and the sharing of outrage are essential for the emergence and consolidation of social movements (Castells, 2012). Communication is thus key for people to overcome fear and develop hope about the possibility of achieving their goals. Attending to these relational needs in social movements, rather than merely focusing on what the politically relevant effect of these instruments ought to be, academic research should observe how “social media embed and engage different ecologies of dissent” (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011, p. 213), which, given the prevalence of digital technologies on ordinary activities, have the potential to redefine the nature of resistance into seemingly nonpolitical actions that acquire political valence (Zayani, 2015). Therefore, Segerberg and Bennett (2011) suggest, rather than observing social media for the mere transaction of messages between participants of a movement or cause, the roles of these technologies should be approached in two ways: by looking at their functions as

organizing mechanisms (as agents), and by analyzing the traces they leave to better understand a protest ecology (as windows). Regarding the first perspective, focusing specifically on Twitter and its role in climate change protests, the authors argue that the social network site become a networking agent that coconstitutes and coconfigures the protest space. In turn, the second perspective suggests that the message streams (of Twitter messages in this case) can reveal characteristics of the protest ecology's wider composition, to distinguish the larger scheme in which a digital protest is embedded. As such, some of these streams can reveal themselves to be “long-running epistemic communities rich with information and analysis, whereas others may serve as brief beacons of information” (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011, p. 202). These two approaches can contribute several revelations about diverse type of protests and demonstrations such as the organizations and resources that operate in the protest environment, the gatekeeping mechanisms utilized to filter what information goes into the communication system, and the role attributed to mass media in the protest’s digital space.

***Networked publics.*** A concept that takes into account these two approaches to assess new media technologies –as organizing agents and as windows—is that of *networked publics*, publics that are restructured by networked technologies, and which simultaneously are “(1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice” (boyd, 2010, p. 39). What this perspective assumes is that technological affordances that facilitate the amplification, recording, and spreading of information and social acts do not determine but do inform the practices and behavior that take place in these networked spaces. Unlike concepts such as audience or consumers, the term

networked publics entails a more engaged stance, in which “publics can be reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception” (Ito, 2007, p. 3). According to boyd (2010), a key characteristic that these publics possess is the fact that the content dealt with is made out by bits (binary digits), which are easier to store, distribute, and search than their older counterparts, atoms (physical objects). This difference brings about four affordances that significantly configure networked publics (boyd, 2010): The expressions online are persistent as they are automatically recorded and archived; the content made out of bits is replicable; the potential visibility of the content is greater; and the content can be searched for. As social networks and other social media become more prevalent, participants in these publics learn how to work with the new dynamics and constraints that these affordances generate. Thus, attention to the developments linked to the structural elements of networked publics can shed light on why people engage the way they do (boyd, 2010).

*Affective publics.* Similarly concerned with the organizing capabilities of these digital platforms, Papacharissi (2016) observes that social media render crowds into publics. Collectively produced news feeds (e.g., groups of messages connected through Twitter hashtags) are thus a result of the emerging publics’ collaboration to share a story in their own terms, and to obtain their own mediality (i.e., giving form, tone, texture to the events in question) through social media. In light of the lack of clarity regarding the democratizing direct effects of online technologies, other interesting questions concern what stories are being told and how, thus placing emphasis “on the texture of civic expression that online media afford” (Papacharissi, 2014, 26). Texture is shaped by

affect, the intensity with which a particular feeling is experienced, which carries political potential because “it marks the difference between saying something and shouting it loud, crying quietly or crying violently” (Papacharissi, 2014, p. 114).

These networked publics are therefore *affective publics*, “mobilized and connected, identified, and potentially disconnected through expressions of sentiment” (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 311). That is, the mode of engagement in these storytelling structures is mostly affective, sustaining latent ties that connect individuals into publics expressing themselves with intensity, rhythmicality, and potentiality. These expressions result in hybrids forms of storytelling that, through new forms of gatekeeping and framing processes that are particular to networks, do more than merely reproduce or portray an event, and mix fact with opinion and emotion, and remix mainstream content to affectively represent subjectivities (Papacharissi, 2014). In that way, these affective statements resemble reactions to politics in everyday lives and allow people to appropriate their own place in the story, feeling their way into politics. For this reason, this perspective stands apart from long-held conceptions of rational deliberation because of the centrality of emotion, as creatively presented political expressions comprise patterns of impulse, restraints, and tonality (Papacharissi, 2016).

Notably, Papacharissi (2014; 2016) points out that these affective publics leave distinct digital footprints depending on the cultural context, since they do not have the same function for all publics. Moreover, they do not necessarily involve collective deliberation to develop frames, rather, the framing of main themes emerges from collaboration through connective practices (such as retweeting), enabling people to connect around commonalities without compromising their belief system and therefore

making these publics more plural (Papacharissi, 2014). Additionally, Papacharissi and De Fatima Oliveira (2012) argue that the messages that power up these affective publics ultimately generate an ambient for such publics, given the constant pace, frequency, and tone of tweets, which combines with the particular architecture of the Twitter medium that invites constancy and continuity. In this way, this online home for a movement is always on, even if not much is happening on the ground. In consequence, the discourse of this emerging public can constitute either a layer of the event or a parallel version of a story about the event. A stream produced online through the storytelling structures that constitute social media adds up to the many perspectives through which we can understand an event: as it occurs on the ground, as broadcast via television, through the conventions of newspaper storytelling, and “as it unfolds through the collaborative narrative structures of platforms like Twitter” (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 316). Therefore, affective publics can potentially represent disruptions of dominant political narratives. Papacharissi (2016, p. 320) stresses that the power of these publics is symbolic, in the sense that these networked publics’ affective expressions are aimed at semantically renegotiating some constants, which is not a small achievement because “the process of reimagining society cannot occur without first negotiating and redefining what societal institutions represent and what their role should be.” Without a declaration of resistance, these forms of connective actions would lack axes to form around (Papacharissi, 2014).

*Counterpublics.* Similarly, another approach that focuses on networked publics and more openly underscores the contentious tone of the affective subjects that conform them is that of counterpublics. Counterpublics are defined as “critical-reflexive spaces of communicative interaction (a first meaning of ‘publics’ here) where alternative identities

and counter-discourses are developed and subsequently can come to ‘publicly’ (second meaning) contest dominant discourses that frame hegemonic practices and meanings” (Dahlberg, 2011, p. 861). Hence, this perspective conceives that the public sphere is constituted by multiple (sub) spheres with unequal weight (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015). A dominant sphere coexists with alternative ones that, particularly at moments of crisis in the former, can challenge the mainstream narrative (Downey & Fenton, 2003). Under this assumption, new media is thought to be conducive to the reproduction of dominant discourses, but also to the development of counterpublics by empowering commonly excluded voices in three ways: “to form counter-publics and counter-discourses; to link up with other excluded voices in developing representative, strategically effective counter-discourses; and subsequently to contest the discursive boundaries of the mainstream public sphere” (Dahlberg, 2011, 861). In order to accomplish their potential on digital platforms, counterpublics discourses are characterized by challenges to the consensus, messages that aim to strengthen their group identity, and messages that point out the power relations that work against them (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015). Furthermore, given the nature of these publics, affect constitutes an important component of their messages, as individuals in this type of spaces are motivated to engage due to perceptions of injustice and exclusion, and are bonded in solidarity with others (Dahlberg, 2011).

Counterpublics should not be understood in isolation, but rather they should be analyzed in terms of how they interact with the dominant public sphere, to observe whether or not the latter can become more open to radical views as counterpublics spheres grow (Downey & Fenton, 2003). Counterpublics have an outward-looking character that seeks to persuade the minds of dominant publics and solidarity of other

marginal groups (Leung & Lee, 2014). Therefore, these types of publics seek to infiltrate mainstream publics in two different ways. First, counterpublics serve as a training ground in which members of these publics can withdraw and regroup (Fraser, 1990) to reflect and articulate reactions and responses about issues that concern them (Leung & Lee, 2014). Second, they serve as a space to conduct agitational activities to disrupt the mainstream public discourse (Fraser, 1990), for example the transmission of information about social movements or that can sustain collective actions (Leung & Lee, 2014).

Establishing the connection between counterpublics and dominant publics is particularly important nowadays because unlike alternative media in the past, whose scale was smaller, the Internet now offers the possibility to break through and “reach out beyond the ‘radical ghetto’ both directly (disintermediation) and indirectly, through influencing the mass media” (Downey & Fenton, 2003, p. 198). In contrast to a deliberative perspective, which focuses on effects on attitudes and behaviors on individuals who participate in online discussions, a counterpublics lens “draws the researcher’s attention to structural diversities and dominant consensus structures of public spheres as a whole”, and to “the impact of the emerging counterpublics on passive, noncommenting mass audiences and on changing discursive structures within the public at large” (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015, p. 483). What both types of networked publics have in common, affective publics and counterpublics, is the capability of challenging status-quo discourses about an issue and developing their own account by bringing light on to certain information and emphasizing certain aspects of events. Two concepts that are helpful to explain how these processes occur are networked gatekeeping and networked framing.

**Networked gatekeeping and networked framing.** As the dynamics for information flow and frame construction have evolved in digital environments, scholars have looked to adapt gatekeeping theory and framing theory to account for these changes. Gatekeeping theory is concerned with explaining how countless messages are reduced to the few that are offered in news media (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). A concept originally created to describe the process of selection of food from the store to the dinner table (Shoemaker, 1996) was later applied to different models of gatekeeping in communication, to explicate “the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited numbers of messages that reach people each day” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 1). This mechanism is considered one of the central roles of media in modern public life, because it entails that these societal actors, by defining what information is selected, are able to shape what becomes a person’s social reality (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Nonetheless, with the emergence of digital technologies and Internet, this top-down transmission structure in a mediated communication environment has transformed into a networked-based structure, as the news diffusion process “now occurs through the fluid relational interplay between the various incumbent and emergent players in networked gatekeeping process” (Ernste, 2014, p. 13). The public is no longer passive because it is “empowered with more choices in news content, direct channels to speak to the press, and the ability to mobilize online crowds” (Xu & Feng, 2014). Consequently, in a web 2.0 networked context, actors with non-elite status offline can become influential online. These online networks are structured according to what is called scale-free distribution, where few actors which “have relatively high centrality but who

generally have low overall cohesiveness to the rest of the network” exist side-by-side to “many network actors, usually members of the general public that “tend to have relatively low centrality but high cohesiveness to a small number of acquaintances” (Ernste, 2014, p. 16). Theoretical extensions to gatekeeping theory that can work for this new context “must thus locate prominent, elite actors and take account of who they are and how they affect the flow of socially contagious information within networked environments” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 142). In order to understand the dynamics in which elites and nonelites negotiate the flow of information in these new circumstances, scholars have developed the concept of networked gatekeeping, a process where “actors are crowdsourced to prominence through the use of conversational, social practices that symbiotically connect elite and crowd in the determination of information relevancy” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 158).

According to Barzilai-Nahon (2008), the traditional notion of gatekeeping had two critical shortcomings: the treatment of the process of gatekeeping as one of only selection, when in fact gatekeeping involves other mechanisms; and the focus on the gatekeepers without attention to the gated. Therefore, gatekeeping should be understood as a broader process “of controlling information as it moves through a gate,” as a result of activities such as “selection, addition, withholding, display, channeling, shaping, manipulation, repetition, timing, localization, integration, disregard, and deletion of information” (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008, p. 1496). Moreover, the power exercised by the gatekeeper to control the information is contingent upon the salience of the gated, which can vary depending on four attributes: the political power of the gated in relation to the gatekeeper; the gated’s ability to produce information; the gated’s relationship with the

gatekeeper; and the alternatives available for the gated in the context of gatekeeping (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). These attributes can be present in different degrees in gatekeeper-gated relationships. As such, instead of a simple top-down gatekeeping mechanism, networked gatekeeping acknowledges a dynamic relationship between gated and gatekeeper, in which the gated can be capable of producing information, can hold political power, can be capable of negotiating with the gatekeeper, can access alternative sources of information, or can have a combination of those attributes.

This perspective complicates the assumptions that consider that “in the Internet era everybody can be a gatekeeper” or “nobody is a gatekeeper” because those are based on an understanding of a network structure that envisions networks as flat, “absent of hierarchical structure in which we are all connected” (Ernste, 2014, p.14), when in fact, there are still differences in hierarchies. Xu and Feng (2014) analysis of Twitter interactions between traditional gatekeepers (the Twitter accounts of US journalists) and citizens exemplifies this disparity. Their results show that the networked gatekeeping is pluralist, as it involves people of different levels of political involvement and background, but citizens that are not politically active possess limited political power in the network, having a shorter number of followers, and short number of messages retweeted.

Similar to gatekeeping, with the proliferation of new media, framing theory has been increasingly perceived as inadequate, because it focuses only on how news reports’ portrayals of an issue influence audiences (Jiang, Leeman, & Fu, 2016), without accounting for the role that audiences can now have in framing construction. Framing theory claims that the way that news reports characterize an issue will influence how the

audience understands that issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). A frame refers to the selection of certain aspects of perceived reality to be made more salient in a text in a way that they define a problem, its moral evaluation, causes, and solutions (Entman, 1993). Frames invite to understand issues in certain ways, such that the effect of exposure to a message with a certain framing will result in people associating two concepts, as suggested by that frame (Bryant, Thompson, & Finklea, 2013). Thus, frames are commonly crucial for the exertion of political power (Entman, 1993). That is, political elites tend to use certain sets of frames about issues to neutralize or render unimportant alternative interpretations of issues (Neuman et al., 2014).

However, changes in the media landscape have impacted the power dynamics between newsmakers and news consumers in a way that the latter can now participate in the framing of an issue (Xu & Feng, 2014). Scholars are thus turning to consider a new form of framing, networked framing, “that relies on the interactions between elite and nonelite users and algorithmic aggregations afforded by new digital platforms” (Jiang, et al., 2016, p. 97). That is, this concept takes into account the relationship between elite actors and crowds to bring salience to issues (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013), as well as the impact that algorithmic aggregations can have in bringing a frame to prominence (Jiang et al., 2016), for example, with hashtags or retweets. Refrains, in the form of retweets on Twitter, “augment the disruption introduced by a single tweet” through the constant repetition of the message (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 155). Moreover, in their study of Sina (a Chinese platform similar to Twitter), Nip and Fu (2016) found that reposts of microblogging messages were often utilized to revise the frames shared by original posters, going beyond the mere replication of the original message, to advance other

communicative functions such as the analysis, interpretation, sharing opinions, and expression of emotion about the issues in question (i.e., news about government corruption). Hence, in networked framing, Entman's traditional definition of frame is reconceived "as a process through which particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations attain prominence through crowdsourcing practices" (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 159). Notably, in contrast to traditional framing, in the case of networked framing, the processes in which these negotiations occur are transparent, more contentious, and more iterative (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). The current study examined a networked public that consolidated on Twitter in response to the case of the disappearance of 43 students in Mexico in 2014, analyzed its texture and its potential as affective public and counterpublic, and explored how the processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing play out in its dynamics. Before posing specific research questions for this investigation, the Mexican context in terms of the proliferation of social media and its use for political and protest purposes are explained. Then, the event of the Ayotzinapa disappearance along with the controversies that surround the case are detailed.

### **Mexican Context**

**Mexican Media.** During most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mexico lived under an authoritarian regime in which governmental institutions were ruled by one hegemonic political organization, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Throughout the decades of PRI's hegemony, the relationship between the government and mass media—privately owned and commercially oriented—was characterized by mutual interdependence and close collaboration (Bravo, 2008). The media was used for political

legitimization: broadcasting concessions were given by the state to guarantee favorable coverage, and politicians bought or started their own papers to advance their agendas (Lawson, 2002). Likewise, media owners conceded to the conditions of the state to be able to protect their economic interests. A key media actor in this collaborative relationship has been the major TV network, Televisa, a monopoly up until the 1990s, which flourished economically during the authoritarian system. Televisa is considered to have been a fundamental piece for the PRI regime to maintain its status during 70 years due to its blatant promotion of the official discourse (Bravo, 2008). According to Lawson (2002), an important aspect of this relationship is that it did not involve overt, aggressive forms of control from the part of the state, but instead the control was performed in more subtle ways through co-optation. The catalogue of pressure forms was not limited to withholding broadcast concessions, but also included paper subsidies, control of the distribution of newspapers stands, direct bribes to journalists, and almost unique incomes for governmental ads (Bravo, 2008).

Given the conditions of complicity between the media and the state in the old regime, the process of democratization did not immediately dissipate these questionable practices resulting of what Lawson has called a “cozy relationship” (2002). Even after the achievement of democratic elections, corrupt practices are still common, “the pressures placed on a number of journalists go beyond the boundaries of what would be deemed acceptable elsewhere; the state retains some important levels of control; and there are doubts over balance and content” (Wallis, 2004, p. 119). In sum, the prevailing media culture is still to a great extent one where journalism is subordinated to political power (Bravo, 2008).

Nevertheless, it must be noted that this culture has been in competition with a trend of independent journalism that has become stronger since the 1970s, lead by journalists, editors, and owners particularly from print media outlets. Critical, good quality reporting that addressed corruption changed the dominant journalistic norms within an important group of journalists, while its commercial success gave media organizations economic independence (Lawson, 2002). In their analysis of the democratic process in Mexico, Tahar Chaouch and Carrasco Brihuega (2008) argue that there is no indication of a progressive evolution toward democracy, but instead, “the simultaneous development of elements of democratic consolidation and authoritarian regression” (p. 208). As it was explained above, the media system scenario is exemplary of this juxtaposition, presenting a combination of media practices from the old authoritarian regime with the presence of independent critical journalism. Studying the Mexican case, Hughes (2003) identified three types of journalism: civic, referring mostly to newspapers committed to facilitating citizen participation and government accountability; market driven, corresponding to TV networks dedicated to commercializing news; and inertial, represented by those media outlets that still followed the traditions from the authoritarian regime.

**Expansion of Internet and social media in Mexico.** Although it is far from being used universally, Internet use has had exponential growth in Mexico in less than a decade. From 2006 to 2015, the amount of people with access to Internet in Mexico has more than tripled, going from approximately 20.2 million to 65 million users in that period, resulting in usage by about 59% of the total population (Asociación Mexicana de Internet, 2016). Additionally, among different online activities, the use of social media is now listed as the most common use of the Internet, and the search for information is

fourth (Asociación Mexicana de Internet, 2016). Facebook is the leading social network in the country with 55 million users in 2016 (eMarketer, 2016), whereas the estimated number of Twitter users in that same year was 23 million (eMarketer, 2017).

**Social media in Mexican politics.** The growth of Internet accessibility in Mexico has been accompanied with an increasing incorporation of social media in political processes. Politicians running for office have used Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter since the midterm elections of 2009, and most predominantly in the 2012 presidential election. An analysis of the role that social media played in the presidential electoral process in Mexico in 2012 revealed two main trends (Equipo Delphos 2012, 2013). On the part of the politicians, there was a lack of understanding of how to take advantage of this new arena for communication. Thus social network sites were used mostly to attack opponents rather than to interact with the users. The main problem the Mexican political class found was that in social media, the message is in control of the public. In turn, looking at citizens' adoption of these tools, the analysis concluded that a new opinion group emerged on online spaces, independent from the traditional group composed by an informed and critical minority, and from those who get information through traditional media that constitute the majority. This new group was composed of thousands of Internet users interested in sharing and discussing political issues.

Moreover, during the 2012 election, social network sites gained notoriety as vehicles for contentious politics after a youth protest sparked from Youtube, culminating in the formation of the online and offline social movement named #Yosoy132. On May 2012, during an event at a university in Mexico City, students protested the presence of presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto, who responded harshly to protesters inquiries

during his talk. In an attempt to avoid further confrontation with them, Peña Nieto had to hide in one of the university restrooms and was eventually taken out of the building through a back door. The scenes of the confrontation with the students and the candidate's "escape" were quickly and widely shared and discussed via social media. In an attempt to do damage control for the campaign through traditional media, the leaders of the parties that Peña Nieto represented in alliance, PRI and PVEM, tried to delegitimize the protest claiming that the demonstrators were not students, and that the protesters had been sent by the opposition (Gómez Quintero, 2014). As a response, 131 students who were at the protest posted a video on Youtube in which they stated their name and university number of registry, showing their student ID to certify that they were in fact students. As the video spread quickly through social media, the hashtag #Yosoy132 (#Iam132) became a popular way to show support and identification with the students (Gómez Robledo, 2015). Along with the virality of the video online, and the increasing discontent with Peña Nieto expressed on social networks, the student movement gained momentum and organized street protests, eventually consolidating into an organized group.

The main cause that #Yosoy132 protested about was the democratization of media, with the claim that the two national TV networks were unfairly promoting one of the presidential candidates, Peña Nieto (Gómez García & Treré, 2014). This demand and accusation are crucial to assimilate the importance of alternative outlets such as those provided by new media in Mexico, because the two largest TV media organizations in Mexico are often blamed of co-opting members of the political class for economic benefits in exchange of a favorable coverage of their public actions (Lay Arellano, 2013).

Under these circumstances, #Yosoy132 movement was a response to the information control exerted by traditional media (particularly national TV networks) and appealed to the roots of the emergent democratic political system (Esteve del Valle, 2015). The #Yosoy132 group prioritized the use of social media as an alternative to traditional media to promote its ideas. Armed with a socio-technical infrastructure provided by Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, the #Yosoy132 movement successfully positioned itself as an actor in the political spectrum (Arteaga Botello & Arzuaga Magnoni, 2014), to the point that it affected how the candidates use their Twitter accounts and had influence in voting preferences among Twitter users (Esteve del Valle, 2015), and was capable of organizing the first presidential debate that was independent from the national electoral organism (Volpi, 2012).

The popularity and strength of the #Yosoy132 movement during the 2012 presidential election, which gained the label of the “Mexican spring” (Esteve, 2015; Volpi, 2012), must be understood as a breaking point in the use of new media for political purposes in Mexico. After the victory of Peña Nieto in the election, which was also tainted with accusations of irregularities (Vergara, 2012), a fraction of the Mexican population have turned to new media and social networks sites to share their grievances. The criticism against the federal government in regards to the disappearance of the 43 students, the topic of the Twitter protest central to this study (explained in detail in the next section), constitutes one of the most important examples of that type of use for these technologies. One of the hashtags derived from the case (#Yamecansé) is the most lasting trending topic in the history of social networks sites in the country with 35 days in the Twitter trending topic list (Torres Nabel, 2015).

In turn, the government has reacted to the citizens' adoption of new media for political dissent. In 2014, Peña Nieto's presidential administration included several controversial dispositions in terms of digital rights as part of the major reform of the telecommunications and broadcasting legislation. The proposed modifications were strongly criticized by civil organizations, opposition legislators, and public opinion as attempts to censor Internet content, access users' data, jam the signal during mass mobilizations, and violate net neutrality (Nájar, 2014; Villafuerte García, 2015). Ultimately, these initiatives, highly discussed by users on social media and protested with large street demonstrations (Montalvo & Messeguer, 2014), were unsuccessful and were dropped from reforms. Nonetheless, these pursuits indicate that the Mexican government is aware of how citizens have become empowered by the expansion of Internet and new media and have tried to limit that power.

### **The Ayotzinapa Case**

**The disappearance of 43 students.** On September 26, 2014, a group of 100 students from Ayotzinapa city's Rural Normal School, an institution that trains teachers of elementary education, traveled to the nearby city of Iguala, in the Southern state of Guerrero, on their way to Mexico City. The reason for their trip was to participate in a march commemorating the killing of students in 1968. The Rural Normal School is a left-wing college, whose students (also referred to as *normalistas*) are known for their participation in activist movements and who have a history of blocking highways as a strategy for protest (Roterman, 2015). In order to travel to the country's capital, they planned to take over buses (with the intention of returning them later), a practice the students often resorted to for transportation (Illades, 2015). Bus drivers, who are used to

this practice, were instructed by their employers to remain in their vehicles to make sure the buses were returned (Semple, 2016). The students allegedly took over four busses (or five according to other versions) from different points near Iguala, a town close to Ayotzinapa. However, one of the drivers convinced the students to leave the passengers already in the vehicle at the Iguala bus station. Once at that place, the driver managed to lock the students in the bus, and called the local police. The other students found out about the situation and went into the city to help their peers (Illades, 2015).

When the mayor of Iguala, José Luis Abarca, was alerted about the presence of the students, he allegedly ordered the Iguala local police to “give them a lesson” (Archibald, 2014). Under Abarca’s instructions, a group of policemen shot at the students in an attempt to detain them. During these shootings that took place at different points around the town throughout the night, four students and two bystanders were killed. The body of one of the deceased students, especially his head, was found deformed with his skull exposed, evidence of the atrocities that occurred (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes, 2016). Furthermore, while many students managed to escape and hide, a group of students was arrested and put into police cars. However, after the attacks, the 43 students taken by the police, all young men, disappeared. On September 27, their parents and college peers declared them missing and a search began.

By the first days of October, the federal Attorney General’s office (named Procuraduría General de la República, PGR) took over the investigations (Castillo, 2014). As the missing students’ parents demanded that federal authorities find the missing *normalistas*, their peers organized protests that increasingly were joined by more citizens, outraged about the case. The demonstrations expanded to other major cities in Mexico,

and the disappearance attracted attention of international organizations such as the United Nations and Humans Right Watch. The Ayotzinapa case represents one of the most critical moment of public unrest during the presidential administration of Peña Nieto.

The situation of crisis for the Mexican government demanded urgent advances in the investigation regarding the missing students. Under such pressure, four months after their disappearance, the PGR claimed to have solved the students' case. On January 2015, the Attorney General, Jesús Murillo Karam, revealed what was called by the government the "historical truth" about the Ayotzinapa case: the 43 students were delivered by the local police to a drug gang, which murdered them because the students were confused with a rival group, and the bodies were burned in a dumpyard (El Universal, 2015). For the authorities, the case had been solved and the criminals involved were to be put to trial.

However, as the government attempted to move on, the Attorney General's declarations were followed by the rejection of the official version by the students' parents. The reasons for turning down those conclusions were that they were heavily based on detainees' declarations and lacked scientific evidence. Besides, members of the Army that were supposedly involved in the disappearance had not been investigated (El Universal, 2015). Despite that reaction, the next day, the Attorney General, Murillo Karam, was emphatic that this was "the historical truth about the events, based on proofs provided by science" (El Universal, 2015).

But, the disbelief of the parents was soon strengthened by the clarifications of the Argentinian Team of Forensic Anthropology (EAAF), a prestigious organization in the field that had joined the investigation, per the request of the parents. The experts infused

doubt about the official version of the Attorney General's office, arguing that there was no scientific evidence showing that the students' remains were in the dumpyard (Redacción AN, 2015). Besides, the organization declared that the Attorney General's office had evidence that had not been analyzed, and that the pieces of bones found in the area needed more examination. The organization said that the evidence needed to be interpreted in light of all possible scenarios and not only those that coincided with the declarations gathered by the attorney general's office. Thus, the case could not be considered closed. Considering this report, the parents argued that the historical truth had "crumbled down in pieces" (Redacción Animal Político, 2015). In their final report of February 2016, the Argentinian team discarded the government version after a yearlong investigation, arguing that there was no scientific evidence that the students were burned in the dumpyard. The team also revealed that the body parts found in that place belonged to 19 individuals, none of whom were the missing students (Agren, 2016).

The Argentinian team's findings were supported by an additional organization that participated in the investigation, a group appointed by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts(GIEI). The group's investigations exposed the Mexican government negligent performance surrounding the case (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes, 2016). For instance, they found that the government investigators did not create individual files for each student with their genetic or teeth information. The neighbors of the town where the students disappeared, who might have been witnesses of the attacks, had not been questioned. Moreover, the GIEI pointed out that there were inconsistencies in the detainees' declarations and that they claimed to have been tortured, which coincided with

medical reports. Besides, the group stated that the version of the calcination of the bodies in the dumpyard was implausible. First, there was no trace of a large fire in the terrain. Second, the five gang members who supposedly burned the bodies declared they had limited resources, when in fact they would have needed 66,000 pounds of wood for a fire of that caliber (Tuckman, 2015). Notably, the GIEI accused the government of putting serious obstacles to their work (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes, 2016). Furthermore, even though the group attempted to extend their stay in the country to continue investigating, the government rejected this option so the group finally left on April 2016 (Martínez Arhens, 2016). No representatives from the government attended the event where the final report was communicated, and the president merely thanked the group's efforts via Twitter (Sánchez, 2016).

Given these circumstances regarding the investigation, more than three years later, the public perception was that the case was not solved (Goldman, 2017; Martínez, 2016). The Mexican authorities continue investigating, even though they never acknowledged that they were mistaken about the “historical truth.” The parents have continued their struggle, traveling around the world to demand aid from foreign governments and international organizations to generate awareness about the disappearance of their sons, and asking for international solidarity. Additionally, small public protests, also led by the parents, have continued on the 26<sup>th</sup> of every month. Moreover, the case is still a topic of ongoing discussion on social media.

**#PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests.** An important component for organizing protests and expressing discontent about Ayotzinapa has been social media platforms. For over three years, one Twitter demonstration has fought to keep the topic alive on the

social network site. This online expression, referred to as a *Roll Call*, is considered for the purpose of the current study to be a contentious performance, a strategy adopted by a group of Mexican Twitter users to make claims against the government about the case of the missing students. The roll call is organized by a well-known Mexican TV producer, former journalist, and activist, Epigmenio Ibarra (who has over 280,000 Twitter followers). The roll call has been active since November of 2014. Every night at 10 p.m., Ibarra posts one tweet for each of the 43 students, with an illustration of the student's face, his full name, and a group of phrases (as many as possible with 140 characters). Each tweet gets about 100 retweets on average daily, a number that has varied throughout the years. The protest receives the name *Pase de lista 1 al 43* (Roll call from 1 to 43). It is intended to keep the Ayotzinapa case in the minds of the public (BBC Mundo, 2015). The roll call organizer explains that naming each young man has the intention of representing the students as more than a number:

Here (*in Mexico*), they pretend to pass the dead and disappeared as numbers, without a face, without a name, without a story. What we try to do every night is to say: 'they have a name, they have a story, it hurts us, they are present' (BBC Mundo, 2015, para. 3).

The phrases that accompany the *Roll Call* tweets are usually focused on demanding justice and rejecting the government's version of the "historical truth." The messages make reference to the latest updates about the case. The tone of the messages is highly critical of the government and the state (a common hashtag used is #fueelEstado, which means #itwastheState), the Army (which is also blamed for the tragedy), and President Peña Nieto. The tweets also address other violent events and unjust situations

happening in Mexico that are perceived to be consequences of authorities' negligence and corruption. As such, the messages on the tweets vary constantly to bring light to recent news on the Ayotzinapa case or to new cases of violence or disappearances. Notably, when people share the roll call tweets, they take advantage of the different options that Twitter provides to retweet, and thus often add their own message to the original tweets.

Moreover, besides the 43 tweets included in the roll call (with the images and names of the students), Ibarra also posts other additional tweets with a similar contentious tone before and after the roll call. As 10:00 p.m. approaches, Ibarra invites others to participate, particularly asking people with a large number of followers on Twitter (such as celebrities, pundits, and journalists) to join him in the *Roll Call*, using the mention function and the hashtag #*PaseDeLista1al43*. The *Roll Call* ends with additional tweets about several topics in which Ibarra continues to address the case of Ayotzinapa; touches upon other cases like the killing of journalists and political activists, the findings of mass graves with bodies of drug violence victims (*narcofosas*), or the kidnapping of immigrants from Central America; and criticizes Peña Nieto's administration. Furthermore, emulating Ibarra, participants of the *Roll Call* summon their followers through tweets using the hashtag #*PaseDeLista1al43*. Even though the tweets with the students' faces and names do not include the hashtag #*PaseDeLista1al43*, the hashtag is used daily to express support to the *Roll Call*, to invite others and to comment on events of the day. These are the tweets that were analyzed in this study and which are referred to as #*PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests.

## **Research Questions**

Unlike other contentious issues where the use of social media has been identified and studied, what makes *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests different is that it has been consistently sustained for years, even after the turmoil on the ground about the Ayotzinapa case has dissipated. This study analyzed the use of this hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* by Mexican Twitter users through the framework of networked publics. The following research questions were posed:

*RQ1:* What are the structural characteristics of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter networked public?

*RQ2:* How does the process of networked gatekeeping unfold in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter networked public?

*RQ3:* What are the networked frames used in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter network?

*RQ4:* What role do protests participants perceive that traditional media sources play in the Ayotzinapa case and in the dynamics of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter networked public?

*RQ5:* What elements of counterpublics are present in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* protests?

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

To explore *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests as a networked public, this study focused on tweets of the daily *Roll Call* and on the perspectives of the participants of the protest. Tweets using the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* that were posted from January 15, 2015 through October 6, 2017 were acquired through the company Follow the Hashtag. For this period, a total of 166,927 tweets that used the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43 or the phrase PaseDeLista1al43* were identified. Figure 1 illustrates the use of the hashtag through this 33-month period. Five different time-points since the event of the students' disappearance were selected for analysis. Other hashtags such as *#Ayotzinapa* or *#Iguala* were not considered for the search because their scope is broader as they comprise tweets concerning the case that were not part of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests. Collecting tweets via Follow the Hashtag facilitated analysis of the structure of this networked public because tweet metadata was provided that includes characteristics of the tweet such as the number of mentions by other Twitter accounts, the amount of likes (favorites), and number of retweets.

Five moments during the first two years of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests were identified for study. Each moment includes a seven-day range of tweets beginning at a specific starting point. The moments selected were either days in which there was an important development for the Ayotzinapa case, or particular markers in the history of the case or the hashtag. Moment One was the beginning of the use of *#PaseDeLista1al43* hashtag, on January 15, 2015 (01/15/2015 -01/21/2015). Even though the event of the disappearance occurred a few months before (on September 2014) and the Twitter protest began around November 2014, the use of this specific hasthag started

on January 15, 2015. Before that, other similar competing hashtags were used (e.g., #Los43, #nosfaltan43), until #PaseDeLista1al43 was selected as representative of the Twitter protest by the protest organizer Epigmenio Ibarra. A total of 1,071 tweets were posted during that week.

Moment Two is marked by a press conference by the Mexican government presenting the results of an investigation of the students' case on January 27, 2015 (01/27/2015 - 02/02/2015). At this press conference, the Mexican Attorney General reported that the students had been killed and burned in a dumpyard by a drug gang, and argued that these findings were the "historical truth." This declaration was controversial and the phrase "historical truth" was commonly criticized in tweets belonging to the *Roll Call*. During that week, 533 tweets were posted using the hashtag. Moment Three was the first anniversary of the students' disappearance on September 26, 2015 (09/26/2015 – 10/02/2015). About 679 tweets were posted using the hashtag during that Moment. Moment Four is the date of the release of the last report of the group of independent investigators of the case developed by the Organization of American States, the GIEI, on April 24, 2016 (04/24/2016 - 04/30/2016). A total of 492 tweets used the hashtag during that period. Moment Five is the second anniversary of the disappearance, on September 26, 2016 (09/26/2016 - 10/02/2016). During that week, 841 tweets were posted. In total, 3,616 tweets were analyzed from the five moments selected. The third year anniversary in 2017 was not considered for analysis because, as illustrated in Figure 1, there was a sudden increase of tweets with the hashtag starting in August 2017 and through October 2017. The tweets during this peak are mostly retweets, a behavior that was inconsistent with the rest of the almost three-year period available for analysis, in which the tweets

were a combination of mostly tweets and some retweets. Although I do not have an explanation for this sudden increase—it could be attributable to the use of Twitter bots—this peak was considered abnormal and was omitted from analysis.

Moreover, besides the tweets collected, the analyses for this study were based on interviews with participants of the protest. In total, 14 in-depth interviews with protest participants were conducted between 2016 and 2018. More details about these interviews are described later in this chapter.

To answer the research questions, this study took a mixed methods approach, combining three different methods: social network analysis, thematic analysis of tweets, and thematic analysis in-depth interviews. Additionally, these methods were complemented with descriptive content analysis about some aspects of the tweets collected (i.e., counts of hashtag use, number of retweets and favorites per Twitter user, and Twitter users' profile descriptions). Through this mixed methods strategy, different approaches were combined for a comprehensive analysis of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protests. Taking a concurrent triangulation approach, I collected different but complementary data implementing diverse methods examining the same moments during the same timeframe and with equal weight (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This type of design was helpful to offset the possible weaknesses of one methodological approach compared to another (Creswell, 2009), and allowed the strengths of each approach to blend into an overall analysis. This strategy provided a better understanding of different aspects of the networked public emergent from the Twitter protest.

Table 1 shows an overview of how each method was used to answer the study's research questions. Each method is described in detail in the following sections.

## **Social Network Analysis**

Social network analysis (SNA) focuses on relationships, and in the patterns of connections among people, groups, and things that emerge from such relationships (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2011). Actors in social network analysis are represented as nodes or vertices, and the interactions or relationships between the actors are defined as edges (Aggarwal, 2011). As such, a social network analysis helps to visualize complex sets of relationships “as maps (i.e., graphs or sociograms) of connected symbols and (to) calculate precise measures of the size, shape, and density of the network as a whole and the positions of each element within it” (Hansen et al., 2011, p. 32). A key axiom in social network analysis is the idea that structure matters, as it can affect the performance of the actors in the network (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009). Thus, SNA looks at social environments to understand behaviors, “whether through influence processes (e.g., individuals adopting their friends' occupational choices) or leveraging processes (e.g., an individual can get certain things done because of the connections she has to powerful others)” (Borgatti et al., 2009, p. 894). Although historically the focus of SNA has been offline social relationships, the popularity of online social network sites, which are designed to model interactions between actors, has led to the proliferation of network-centric data from social media and an increasing interest in their study (Aggarwal, 2011).

To answer RQ1, the metadata obtained from the acquisition of tweets from Follow the Hashtag was utilized to map the structure of the networked public with Node XL, an open-source template for Excel that facilitates the development of network graphs (Smith, 2017). Content in Twitter can be networked in multiple ways, taking into account

the different features of the online platform (Hansen et al., 2011). A traditional way to understand a network formed on Twitter is by looking at the friends and followers of users' accounts. However, a message using a certain hashtag can be found and interacted with, regardless of users' relationship with the author (whether they follow her or not). Thus, the relationships formed using addressivity markers such as replies, mentions, and retweets can also be analyzed as networks. The current study followed the approach used by prior research on Twitter networked publics (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012; Papacharissi, 2014). Therefore, the analysis of the tweets using the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* focused on the linkage data of two Twitter markers, mentions and retweets, to illustrate the overall links between nodes and to observe which are the most important nodes within the network in terms of how many mentions and retweets they got. Consequently, the structure of the network is represented visually with the Twitter users as nodes and the links illustrated with lines that unite the nodes are representative of two different forms of interactions between them: mentions and retweets. Moreover, network analysis with Node XL provides several specific metrics that are helpful to understand the attributes of the network. Four metrics used for this analysis were:

- 1) Degree of the Vertex: Indicates the number of unique edges connected to a node (Hansen et al., 2011). For the current analysis, this measure is indicative of the amount of interactions (mentions and retweets) each node (Twitter user) has. This metric can be split into two measures: 1a) In-Degree, which provides an account of the number of edges that point toward the node of interest; and 1b) Out-Degree, which measures the number of edges that a particular node points toward.

2) Reciprocity of the network: Establishes “the fraction of edges that are paired of, i.e., paired with an edge of the opposite direction” (Jiang, Zhang, & Towsley, 2015, p. 1). The symmetry or asymmetry of the relationship between nodes helps elucidate how actors pay attention to one another, and thus indicates how strong is the social tie between them (Hansen et al., 2011).

3) Graph Density: Accounts for how interconnected the nodes in a network are (Hansen et al., 2011).

4) Average Geodesic Distance: The geodesic distance indicates the number of relations in the shortest possible path from one actor to another (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005).

### **Descriptive Analysis**

For RQ2, the main goal was to understand the process of networked gatekeeping related to the *#PaseDeLista1al43* twitter protest. Two steps taken towards that goal were 1) identifying what type of Twitter users took part of the protests and 2) establishing the most popular users in the network according to the amount of retweets and favorites they got in tweets they created. First, following procedures from prior research (Jiang, et al., 2016; Xu, et al., 2014), I conducted a descriptive content analysis of the profiles of all Twitter users ( $N = 908$ ) that tweeted with the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* during the five moments selected for analysis, by examining the information in each user’s Twitter biography. Taking into account users’ self-disclosure of affiliations and information in the biography section of their profile, each user was coded to establish the identity of the Twitter user. The identities of these users were coded as: non-elite actors (i.e., regular Twitter users), elite actors (i.e., journalists, media outlets, or celebrities), activists/ non-

governmental organizations, bloggers/blogs, and bots. Also to address RQ2, a descriptive analysis of frequencies of retweets and favorites was conducted to determine who were the most popular Twitter users in the protest. For each moment analyzed, a list of 15 Twitter users with the highest number of retweets and a list with 15 Twitter users with the highest number of favorites in a tweet were identified.

The goal of RQ3 was to determine the predominant frames in the collected tweets. One procedure to determine such frames was examining the hashtags included in the tweets analyzed. Hashtags can act as high-level framing devices to self-organize content (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012) and can indicate central concerns of those participating in a network (Papacharissi, 2016). Hence, taking a similar approach to Meraz & Papacharissi (2012), a descriptive content analysis was conducted to establish frequencies of the most popular hashtags in the tweets collected. The main themes emerging from the most used hashtags at the five different moments analyzed were described.

### **Interviews**

To address RQ2, RQ4, and RQ5, I conducted 14 interviews with participants of the Twitter protest. This technique for collecting data is the most common in which humans have attempted to understand each other (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Interviews provide the possibility to enter another's person perspective, allowing the subject to explain her experiences in her own terms (Patton, 1990). As such, this method helps the researcher to delve into "people's ideas, their thoughts, their opinions, their attitudes, and what motivates them" (Berger, 2000, p. 113). Previous research related to the topic under examination in this study has utilized interviews to understand the perspectives of participants. Whittier (1997) interviewed members of a radical feminist group, to

understand how they constructed their collective identity and furthered the continuation of their movement. In the context of social media, Warren, Sulaiman, and Jaaffar (2014) investigated how activists used Facebook to foster civic engagement, interviewing individuals who actively advocate for a political or social outcome on the social platform.

The type of interview used in the current project was the semi-structured interview, in which a list of open-ended questions with main topics to discuss during the conversation was established (see Table 2). However, the interaction maintained a conversational dynamic and follow-up questions on emerging topics were posed to pursue ideas that came up during the talk. This flexible structure is useful to obtain relevant data that facilitates understanding the behaviors of the subjects in this relatively new phenomenon without imposing *a priori* categories (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

To determine the criteria of inclusion in the sample (i.e., what constitutes a *Roll Call* participant) the researcher identified different levels of engagement with the protest. First is the protest organizer who tweets the original messages with the images and names of the students, and invites people to join every day when the scheduled hour is approaching. But motivating other Twitter users to retweet is not exclusive of the organizer, because other participants also send daily messages to ask followers to join. Some participants, especially celebrities or opinion leaders, ask their followers to participate even though they do not retweet the images of the students. There are protesters who do not recruit people but that take part on the protest by retweeting the 43 messages that compose the *Roll Call*. Some of these protesters take advantage of the Twitter features that allow a user to add his or her own message when retweeting, while others merely share the tweets with their network.

In light of these variations, a protest participant was considered a Twitter user that actively contributes to the protest by, at minimum, inviting people to join in the *Roll Call* or retweeting the *Roll Call* from his or her individual account at least once a week. Nonetheless, all participants interviewed claim to participate more than once a week and most of them did so on a daily basis. The strategy to recruit participants was a mixed purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), considering two qualitative sampling approaches. The first approach was criterion sampling, picking cases that meet specific requirements (participants who retweet the *Roll Call* once a week at least). Furthermore, the additional sampling approach was snowballing, identifying two key informants—also protesters—who led to more possible participants to interview. Additionally, each interviewee was asked to help contact other potential interviewees. Participants were found and contacted via Twitter.

The final sample consisted of 14 interviewees, including 6 participants who identified as female and 8 participants who identified as male. Their average age was 49.5 years, with the youngest being 29 years old, and the oldest 63 years old. In total, 11 of the interviewees lived in Mexico and 3 lived in other countries. Only two of the participants were not of Mexican nationality (one Dominican and one Scottish). The majority ( $n = 9$ ) identified their political ideology as leaning left, one participant claimed to identify with the center, and three participants refused to position their political ideology in the left-right spectrum. Additional demographic information about the interviewees is presented on Table 3. The sample size was determined according to theoretical saturation. When I determined that the gains from an additional interview would be marginal, because no new information or theoretical variation for the research

questions under study would be obtained with the next case, then saturation had occurred (Glasser & Strauss 1967; Lunt & Livinstone, 1996; Pauly, 1991).

The interviews were conducted in two different periods: 10 interviews took place in July 2016 and 4 interviews took place in February and March 2018. The interviews were conducted by phone or using the audio feature of the software service Skype. Additionally, two of the interviews were conducted via the Direct Message feature of Twitter, per the request of those participants. The interviews' length was 39 minutes in average; the shortest interview lasted 23 minutes and the longest lasted over 1 hour. One conversation was carried out in English and thirteen were carried out in Spanish. Spanish interviews were fully transcribed and translated to English by the researcher. Overall the interviews resulted in 163 double-space pages of transcription. Thematic analysis and procedures from the constant comparative method were conducted to code the responses of the interviewees, following the steps explained in the next section.

### **Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis in this study was used to code the responses from interviewees and as a stand-alone method to code the 3,616 tweets from the five moments selected for examination. Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information where the goal is to identify themes from the data (Boyatzis, 1998). Theme refers to “a pattern found in the information that at minimum describe and organize the possible observation, and at maximum interpret aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Depending on the criteria established by the researcher, themes may emerge from raw information as a product of an inductive process or may be generated deductively, taking prior research

or extant theory as basis. This study used both approaches: inductive thematic analysis for RQ3, and deductive thematic analyses for RQ2, RQ4, and RQ5.

Themes were examined using procedures from the constant comparative method (CCM) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a technique that allows for the reduction of data through a process of coding and recoding (Fram, 2013). Despite its origins in the grounded theory methodology, the constant comparative method can be used outside of grounded theory as a tool to systematize data and to find patterns to conceptualize a phenomenon (Boeije, 2002; Fram, 2013). Therefore, even though this study does not aim to generate a theory, CCM was pertinent for data interpretation and to generate categories that were considered as main themes present in the data under study (Fram, 2013).

Similar to other qualitative research traditions, the core of the constant comparative method is the process of comparison (Boeije, 2002). Additionally, I followed Braun and Clark's (2006) guidelines to conduct thematic analysis. I familiarized myself with the content of the tweets while cleaning the data set for SNA procedures, and with the interview transcripts through reading them several times. Then I developed initial codes, "tagging and naming selections of text" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 19), and coding for as many patterns as possible. Afterwards, I sought broader themes, considering how the codes could be combined, and these broader themes were then refined and collapsed. In the report of these analyses (see Chapter Four), I present the stories that these themes tell, including exemplars that capture and convey the essence of the themes.

RQ3 focuses on determining what frames were networked into prominence in the tweets using the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43*. In contrast to framing in a non-network context, in which actors have specific roles as information producers sources or audience

members, Twitter affordances are central to shaping framing practices as a networked phenomenon, involving elite and non-elite Twitter users (e.g., journalists, celebrities, and regular Twitter users) (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012). In networked framing processes, Twitter users create narratives by “assembling imbricated layers of tweets, some authored by them, some remixed and reedited, some redacted, and several retweeted” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012, p. 156). Despite the fragmented nature of these activities, the flow of this information results in crowdsourced frames, themes that are organically and collaboratively developed (Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2014). Thus, the thematic analysis focused on the content of the collected tweets from the five different moments to determine what were the themes that prevailed in the messages using the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43*. Other studies have utilized thematic analysis of tweets to examine the public understanding of issues in the context of political communication events such as elections (Poulakidakos & Veneti, 2016), situations of public interest such as natural disasters (Parsons, Atkinson, Simperl, & Weal, 2015), and social protests (Kulkarni, 2016). Similarly, prior research has taken a thematic analysis approach for news stories (e.g., Anstead & O’Loughlin, 2015; Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015).

For RQ3, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted, allowing the themes to emerge from the raw data, without a priori categories in mind. The coding process was executed taking several iterative steps to code and recode. First, incidents identified in the data were compared with other incidents, to label each one and develop concepts. Throughout the analysis, the concepts developed were then challenged with new fresh data, which were either associated with an existing concept or labeled with a new concept (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These concepts were combined and grouped into categories

that stand for the main themes in the data. The process was repeated until categories reached saturation (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), when a new observation did not add to the category or did not result in developing a new concept or category, and until categories could not be further collapsed.

Lastly, in order to address RQ2, RQ4, and RQ5, I conducted deductive thematic analyses, driven by particular theoretical interests and/or a previously posed research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006). Deductive thematic analysis “tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 12). The goal of RQ2 was to explore the process of networked gatekeeping, including an exploration of how this process occurs from the perspective of the participants. The interviewees’ responses were coded taking into account relevant aspects about the concept of networked gatekeeping. Mainly, the coding process to respond to RQ2 involved identifying instances in which the participants talked about their relationship with other protesters, especially those Twitter users considered as elite actors, and instances in which participants talked about the functions that they perceive they have in the protest. Similarly, in RQ3 the goal was to explore the perceptions of protesters in respect to the role they consider that media organizations have on the dynamics of the coverage about the Ayotzinapa case and on the Twitter protest. The interviewees’ responses were coded taking those aspects into account.

Lastly, the purpose of RQ5 was to identify elements of counterpublic discourse in the Twitter protest. To respond to this question I conducted a deductive thematic analysis of the tweets and the interviewees’ responses. Elements that were considered as markers of counterpublics are as follows: 1) messages in which the protesters sets their message

apart from the mainstream and dominant message of the superordinate public sphere, explicitly deconstructing the latter as mainstream and dominant (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015); 2) messages that challenge the consensus of the superordinate public sphere (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015); 3) messages that seek to strengthen the collective identity of the group (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015); and 4) messages that evince efforts to infiltrate mainstream public discourse (Graham & Smith, 2016) in two ways: 1) as a training ground to reflect and articulate reactions about the students' case and issues similar to the case; and 2) as a space to conduct disruptive agitational activities (Fraser, 1990).

## **Chapter Four: Results**

This study analyzes the networked public that emerged from the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests in order to better understand the role of Twitter for performing contentious politics. The research questions focused on understanding the network structure (RQ1), and on the processes of networked gatekeeping (RQ2) and networked framing (RQ3) that occurred within the #PaseDeLista1al43 network. The impact of traditional media in the protest dynamics, as discussed by the protest participants, was also explored (RQ4). Lastly, the study investigated what elements of counterpublics were present on this networked public (RQ5). Social network analysis of Twitter data, descriptive content analysis of Twitter data, and deductive and inductive thematic analyses of interview data and Twitter data were conducted to answer these questions. Results of these procedures are described next.

### **RQ1: What are the Structural Characteristics of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter networked data?**

This research question addressed the structural characteristics of the Twitter protest as a networked public, focusing on two types of interactions between Twitter users who posted messages with the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43: mentions and retweets. The analysis was conducted using Node XL. Figure 2 and 3 present the network of mentions over the five moments selected for study. These networks illustrate the instances when a user tagged someone else's Twitter handle to directly address a tweet to that person. The network has 668 vertices (Twitter users), 463 unique edges (connections between Twitter users), and 2,988 edges with duplicates, for a total of 3,451 edges. The density of the network (the percentage of connections that occur in the network out of the

potential connections that could be made) is 2%. This low density, in addition to the large amount of edges that are duplicates, indicates that there are primarily a few Twitter users who are communicating with most of the Twitter users involved in the network.

Similarly, reciprocity between vertices is 4%, indicating that communication within the network is not back and forth in the form of a conversation between users, but is instead unidirectional. Thus, the overall network is characterized as a broadcast network, where mentions are connected to few particular hubs with little interaction with each other (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015).

Figure 2 and 3 portray two types of influencers or prominent users in the network. Figure 2 emphasizes vertices according to their in-degree centrality, which is the amount of connections pointing inward to a vertex. Represented from low to high levels of in-degree centrality in red, purple, and blue, the center shows a clear main actor in the network, the protest organizer @epigmenioibarra. The other vertex that received attention in the form of mentions is Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto (@EPN). As for the rest of the vertices, there is a diversity of singers and actors, journalists and media outlets, blogs, and citizens in the network. In turn, Figure 3 shows the same network but emphasizes vertices with higher out-degree levels, which are nodes that have more connections pointing outward (users tagging others, not being tagged). In this case, the main Twitter user is once again, @epigmenioibarra, who composes many tweets inviting others to join the protest. However, the rest of the vertices are mostly non-elite Twitter users (e.g., @jesus\_garcia158, @licledezma, @AlidaFreites\_tw), with the exception of one non-governmental organization (@Coordinadora1DM) and one radio show host (@TapiaFernanda). Although Twitter users considered as elite are often mentioned in the

protest, it is citizens who do most of the mentioning, attempting to gain more attention for the *#PaseDeLista1al43* hashtag. Finally, another metric to note regarding this network is its average geodesic distance, 2.8. This indicates how much users know each other, taking into account the path from one user to another, which is in this case is close to 3 nodes. That is, there is a relatively high level of closeness between users, likely because out of the 668 vertices, 627 are connected to one user, [@epigmenioibarra](#).

Figures 4 and 5 show the network of retweets during the five moments studied. This network has 35 vertices, 135 edges in total, including 12 unique edges and 122 edges with duplicates. The density of this network is 2%, and reciprocity is 0%. Thus, similar to the mentions network, retweet interactions on this network are unidirectional and limited to only some users replicating what a few others posted rather than a network of interactions across all users. As such, the structure of retweets as addressivity markers also has the features of a broadcast network, in which retweets are emerging from few central sources. Likewise, the average geodesic distance is 2.9, indicating that there is not much separation between the users involved in the network. Figures 4 and 5 emphasize the degree centrality of the main users in the network. These graphs display that the protest organizer [@epigmenioibarra](#) received more retweets within the network, but he does not retweet others. As shown in Figure 5, which emphasizes the vertices with higher levels of out-degree centrality, the actor that does more retweeting is [@AyotzinapaFeed](#), a Twitter account dedicated to spreading news about the Ayotzinapa case. Most of the larger vertices in both graphs belong to regular Twitter users, except for [@MT\\_enMEXICO](#), a Twitter account belonging to a news blog.

**RQ2: How does the Process of Networked Gatekeeping unfold in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Networked Public?**

This question sought to understand how different type of users (elite and non-elite crowds) interacted with each other in the gatekeeping process, who were the main gatekeepers in this Twitter protest, and how these interactions led to the development of a crowdsourced elite in charge of maintaining the online #PaseDeLista1al43 conversation.

**Type of users.** The first step to answer this Research Question was to determine the type of users who participated in the protests. To do this the Twitter accounts for each user who tweeted at least once during the five moments were coded by classifying them as non-elite users (citizens), elite users (actors and singers, famous intellectuals, journalists), activists or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), bloggers or blogs, and bots. Results, presented on Table 4, show that the majority of the participants (80.8%) were non-elite users (regular citizens). In turn, only a small percentage of the overall participants (7.7%) were elite users. Given the topic in question—a case related to human rights violations—activists or NGOs were expected to have more participation in the protest, but their presence was overall low throughout the periods studied, although they had more participation during Moment 3. Blogs dedicated to disseminating information and creating awareness about social issues in Mexico also had minor participation in the digital protest. The participation of two types of bots tweeting with the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 was detected. Some of these bots were Twitter accounts that provided automatic updates about the hashtag, for example, if the hashtag was a trending topic at the moment. The other kind of bot involved Twitter accounts with very similar characteristics among accounts, in terms of the type of profile photo used, the

information in the user profile section, the amount of followers, the users followed, and the content, wording, and timing of tweets. The amount of bots detected was low relative to the total amount of users that took part of the digital protests.

**Most popular users.** Beyond looking at the type of actors tweeting in *#PaseDeLista1al43*, the amount of retweets and favorites per user is also pertinent to explicate the gatekeeping process that took place on this network, given that the use of these two addressivity markers is indicative of popularity of certain vertices in a network. Table 5 shows the users with the highest number of retweets and favorites in a single tweet. The table presents two lists per moment and two lists for the aggregate of the 5 moments, each one indicating the 15 users with the highest number of retweets and favorites in a tweet. The table only shows the highest number of retweets and favorites an actor received in a tweet, regardless of whether that actor had other tweets with a high number of retweets and favorites.

As expected, @epigmenioibarra was at the top of most of these lists, and in fact, he had dozens of tweets with hundreds of retweets and favorites throughout the five moments. @epigmenioibarra is an elite user who constitutes the main gatekeeper of this protest. Another user who gained prominence in the *#pasedelista1al43* protests is @DeniseDresserG, a famous Mexican intellectual with many followers (almost 4 million). @DeniseDresserG received the most favorites and retweets in a single tweet for the five moments analyzed. Other elite users who had popular tweets were radio show host @TapiaFernanda, movie actress @marisolgase, journalist @julioastillero, and intellectual @JohnMAckerman. Popular Mexican news blogs such as @MT\_enMEXICO, @AnonymousMEX\_, and @GastosPendejos also had prominent

tweets among the body of tweets analyzed. The popularity of these Twitter users illustrate the role of elite actors, particularly of @epigmenioibarra and @DeniseDresserG, in disseminating certain messages in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest. However, non-elite crowds including non-famous citizens with Twitter accounts also have a role as gatekeepers of this networked public. As shown on Table 5, tweets by non-elite users were popular in terms of favorites and retweets. What stands out about these non-elite Twitter users is that they gradually emerge as recurrent popular users in the discussion. As such, the consolidation of non-elite users as prominent within the network is noticeable by observing how certain non-elite Twitter users gained and maintained notoriety in the form of retweets and favorites as the use of the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 persisted throughout two years. This is particularly evident on the last three moments selected for analysis (see Table 5), in which we can observe that some of the non-elite Twitter users reappeared among the most popular users in the network in Moment 3, Moment 4, and Moment 5 (e.g., @hekglez, @alexabreο22).

**Interactions between elites and crowds.** In order to gain a better understanding of the consolidation of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protest and the emergence of crowd-sourced elites, I conducted a deductive thematic analysis of interviews with 14 protesters. The interviewees explained how they started participating in the protest, discussed how they participate in the protest, and described their motivations to participate. The analysis revealed that the interviewees acknowledged a key role of elite Twitter users, particularly Epigmenio Ibarra, for starting and sustaining the protest. The participants also discussed how they gained prominence in the protest, and pointed out that they have assumed specific networked gatekeeping functions in the online protest.

**The role of elites.** The protest was not the result of a planned strategy by a large group or an activism organization. Instead, it emerged from individual citizens who resorted to Twitter to express their grievances about the sudden disappearance of 43 students. An interaction between a popular Twitter user with hundreds of thousands followers and a citizen who was a novice in the use of Twitter evolved into a systematic online demonstration. The participant who started the Twitter *Roll Call* of the missing students' names explained how the idea emerged:

In the marches (*on the streets*) we say the numbers 1 to 43 and we yell 'justice' at the end, and at some point he (*Epigmenio Ibarra*) said, why don't we invite people to do 43 tweets using the number? Right? And since I had been downloading all illustrations (*of the students*) what I did was I organized them, there were many, but many (*illustrations*). So I started putting not only the number, but the name and illustration, and then I kept tagging him and then he kept saying, I invite my followers to retweet this [...] And at some point he (*Epigmenio Ibarra*) began to set a fixed time, first it was at 11, this was all in a period of one or two weeks, and he started doing it, it was around November (2014) when he started doing it systematically at 10 at night (Interview 1).

The interviewee emphasized that she purposefully sought to get attention from a celebrity in order to disseminate the images of the students' illustrations taken from the website of a group of artists (*Ilustradores for Ayotzinapa*). She explained:

My daughter told me that if you tag and you label someone famous or important with many followers your tweets can have much more diffusion. Then very early on when I started uploading the images of the Ayotzinapa illustrators I was

tagging Epigmenio Ibarra who at that time had more than 180,000 followers, right? And Epigmenio Ibarra, without knowing me, as is the issue with networks, he saw that I uploaded these images and came to send some tweets in which he said, I invite my followers to retweet (Interview 1).

This statement indicates how an idea from a non-elite Twitter user came into prominence with the help of an elite Twitter user. The protester considers her role in starting the *Roll Call* to be a fluke because her only motivation when collecting the students' images and tweeting their names was to have her voice heard and to keep the missing student case at the center for public opinion.

The story of the beginning of the protest illustrates the role that elite users with a large following can have on the success of a conversation about an issue on Twitter. Although some other popular figures have taken part in the online demonstration, for the case of #PaseDeLista1al43 protests, it is clear that the leadership of Epigmenio Ibarra was key to the continuation of the use of this hashtag. As another interview participant noted: "Yes, yes, we are somehow organized, and well, now the one we follow, who we follow is basically Don Epigmenio, right? He is the one that moves us" (Interview 12). That is, beyond the nascence of the *Roll Call*, other interviewees often refer to the importance of this elite actor's influence in their involvement on the protest. An example of this influence is shown in the following quote:

When I started to do it (*a roll call*) there in Germany, and you know that in Mexico at 10 o'clock Epigmenio Ibarra does it. At some point he contacted me, I think he realized that I did it too, but that I did it every time I remembered or I wanted to or had time. And one day he sent me a direct message and he said, hey,

I see that you are not here—then I was not in Mexico—but then I would like to ask you to continue to help us, or not to leave it, if you can do it daily, well, do it, because he noticed that, in a way, the daily impact was receding. Then I said yes, ah, yes, and in fact, it would not take too long for me to return to Mexico, but I still kept doing it, and then I assumed the commitment to say, well, I have to do it (Interview 5).

Similar to the case above, another participant explained that he was invited to participate by Epigmenio Ibarra:

I uploaded my first tweet and I got retweeted by mister Epigmenio Ibarra, who is a famous producer of movies and TV here in Mexico, and he invites me to participate, to keep raising our voice until we know what truly happened to this people. That's how I initiate in the *Roll Call* (Interview 11).

For both protesters, gaining attention from a celebrity solidified their commitment to the cause of Ayotzinapa case and specifically to their contribution to *#PaseDeLista1al43*. Thus, the role of Epigmenio Ibarra as gatekeeper of the networked public was facilitated by his status as celebrity, and yet, his interaction with others also resulted in elevating less popular Twitter users as network gatekeepers.

**Crowdsourced elites.** Some of the most active participants in *#PaseDeLista1al43* reported that they gained prominence on Twitter thanks to their contribution to this discussion. Regular Twitter users became elites on the *#PaseDeLista1al43* networked public through crowdsourced actions, specifically, increasing the amount of regular Twitter users that follow them on the platform. In addition to the attention from celebrities such as Epigmenio Ibarra, the main way in which interviewees assess their

prominence on the protests is by the amount of followers they accumulated on Twitter. In the next passages, two protesters share their perception about the growth of their account since they started contributing to the demonstration:

Look, I started, as I told you, in Twitter I started in 2014, I must have (*used it for*) about four years. A bit later came the *Roll Call* of the problem with the Ayotzinapa students. Before that I had very few followers, I had about 150 followers, now I'm at about 3,000. When I started to be active in this movement, I must be around 3,000, every day I'm having between 10 and 15 followers [...] Definitely yes, as I tell you, I don't know, this is as the arms of an octopus, they keep growing, you know a person and that person connects you with another, and that person knows another one, and so it goes (Interview 11).

I started to interact, interact, and in about, what can I tell you? in three months Epigmenio was following me. I was not very... I did not follow many, I really started to make the *Roll Call* when I had 20 followers, nothing more, and all family, right? And well, of 20 followers, it is two years ago that I have my Twitter, well now, well you saw already I have more than five thousand (*followers*) (Interview 4).

Another indicator of prominence from tweeting about #pasdelista1al43 was the global response described by interviewees:

And incredibly, I noticed that people from Greece, Italy, Scotland, even Germany itself began to join the *Roll Call* that I just started but for my healing, because it was like a consolation just for me to do it (Interview 5).

What the testimonies of these participants have in common is that they became part of the Twitter conversation in an organic manner, with the mere intention of airing their opinions about the case from their individual point of view. However, according to their accounts, participants ended up developing expansive connections with people who shared their views and even becoming relatively popular actors in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* network.

***Networked gatekeeping.*** As committed gatekeepers in this networked public, the crowd-sourced Twitter elites assume certain functions in the protest. One important function is making sure the hashtag—and with that the topic of the Ayotzinapa case—maintains a presence online:

There are government people who are blocking the hashtag, to stop them they do the new ones, that's where the new ones come out, the new hashtags, so that we do not get bots, then, that's what we're dealing with. Rather (*organized interactions*) it's not about the case but about how we will interact, how we are going to make the tweets, at what time the tweets will be made (Interview 3).

As the participant above indicates, keeping this hashtag active is important in light of what they perceive to be systemic attempts to minimize the strength of the hashtag on the social network. Similarly, another way of procuring the persistence of the hashtag is inviting other followers by using the mention addressivity marker, so that friends on their network will take part of the conversation:

I checked on my statistics the number of impressions and yes, it increased substantially. That is to say, the people to whom it was sent (*a tweet with a*

*mention*), yes, they gave retweet and the number of impressions grew in a remarkable way. (Interview 4)

The strategy of tagging others on Twitter to keep the topic trending is also utilized to gain attention of celebrities:

It happened now for example that he (*President Peña Nieto*) went to Berlin, for example there was an international organization, such as Amnesty Dutschland, Amnesty Germany, which started a previous campaign before Peña arrived in Germany. That is, we got (*Mexican player*) Chicharito, you see that he is in a (*soccer*) team, in Leverkusen, we got this girl, Elisa, Elisa, I forgot her last name, who is the principal dancer of the Berlin opera to say, hear, now that you are going to see the president, well, ask them where are the 43 (Interview 5).

Furthermore, an additional function that these gatekeepers assume is to curate the topics that are talked about in the conversation, making sure that relevant details of the case do not escape public attention. An example of efforts to shape the conversation happening on *#PaseDeListaIal43* is described as follows:

In fact with them, also the *Roll Call* has been important to visualize them (*students killed during the police persecution*). In the *Roll Call* of Epigmenio Ibarra, they were not contemplated, as the case of Edgar, who is the boy who was wounded in the face. Neither was considered the case of the two executed children, which are Julio César Ramírez Nava and Daniel Solís [...]. But, well obviously my answer on Twitter is not compared at all to that which Epigmenio has. So then I told him, well I've been doing the *Roll Call* to these two boys who

were executed, but I think it would be better if you did it, because it is you who has responses. And yes, yes, he agreed (Interview 9).

Concerned about the lack of attention on the assassination of students on the night of the disappearance of the 43, this participant reached out to the protest organizer to influence the *#PaseDeLista1al43* conversation. The anecdote above illustrates how the non-elite and elite Twitter users in the protest interacted to filter and configure the topics discussed in the protest. In that sense, unlike the traditional gatekeeping processes, the dynamics of networked gatekeeping on Twitter are less constrained and more porous.

### **RQ3: What are the Networked Frames used in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter Network?**

In order to elucidate the main frames used to talk about the Ayotzinapa case in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* protests, a thematic analysis of tweets was conducted and the main hashtags utilized in the tweets were analyzed. The thematic analysis revealed that the 3,616 tweets across the five moments selected for study contain three broad themes: the Ayotzinapa case involving the disappearance of 43 students, discussion of the political and social context in Mexico, and the Twitter protest using the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43*. Each of these are described in detail below.

**The Ayotzinapa case.** Tweets included in the first theme addressed different aspects of the Ayotzinapa case. Within this theme, sub-themes specifically addressed the 43 students, the disappearance of the students, the government's role in the issue, and the street protests about the case.

**The 43 students.** The daily exercise of roll calling on Twitter is an attempt to emphasize the humanity of the missing students by portraying their physiognomy and names. Some of the twitter messages contained the name of one student, for example:

Carlos Lorenzo Hernández Muñoz. We will never forget you! #PaseDeLista1al43  
#ImTired26 (christian, 2015).

Likewise, some other tweets included the name and faces of the students in the form of photos or art illustrations (See Figure 6). These drawings also include details about the lives of the students, for instance, features of their personality, their nicknames, celebrations of their birthdays, information about their family and friends (See Figure 7). These tweets also contain references to the missing students' future and aspirations, as expressed in the following tweet:

#Pasedelista1al43 We are missing 43dreams. 43\*43futures. 43hurricanes budding  
#Wearemissing43 (leo orozco, 2015).

Some tweets emphasize that the students were training to be teachers and how their future students are awaiting for their return (See Figure 8). The missing students are talked about in endearing terms, regularly being referred to as “our brothers” or “our friends”, as exemplified in this tweet:

@epigmenioibarra to demand justice and remember our brothers, there are not times nor schedules, we will be attentive to #PaseDeLista1al43 (trota mundos, 2015a).

The authors of the tweets and/or illustrations that accompany them express familiarity with the students, arguing that they personally have been affected by their disappearance, making claims such as: “I miss him,” “I wait for him,” “I want to hug

him,” and “I want to know where he is.” There are also several allusions to the students being lights that illuminate the country:

Today you are here brother, today you enlighten and give strength to your parents, you enlighten a wounded homeland #Ayotzinapa19Months #PasedeLista1al43  
(xmax444, 2016b).

Likewise, the students are referred to as seeds that started a movement, such as in the following post:

@epigmenioibarra #Pasedelista1al43 They raised the word as a standard, plowing our memory to sow the fruitful seed... (Alfredo, 2016b).

***The students' disappearance.*** Although the focus of the online protests is the students' disappearance, the majority of the tweets do not discuss details of the events of September 26, 2014. Instead, the messages focus on reiterating the fact that a misfortune occurred. A phrase repeated consistently in the digital protest is “Alive they were taken, alive we want them:”

No forgiveness, no oblivion, Alive they were taken, alive we want them!!

@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 (Cisneros, 2016).

These statements stress the core of the issue (the students disappearance) and the main demand in respect to it (that they should be found alive). As such, in a significant portion of the tweets analyzed, Twitter users prioritized keeping attention on the issue and sharing their reactions about the disappearance, more than discussing in-depth details.

Furthermore, the tweets underscore the belief that the government tried to cover-up what happened. The #PaseDeLista1al43 protest is Twitter users' attempts to counter

government efforts by keeping attention on the issue. The protests organizer expresses that intention in the following tweet:

Twitterers it is a duty to do an effective counterbalance to Peña Nieto's attempt to make us forget. That's why I ask you to join #PaseDeLista1al43 10PM RT (Ibarra, 2015a).

The rejection of the official version of what happened to the students, labelled by Mexican attorney general as the “historical truth” (“verdad histórica”), was made clear on the Twitter protest with the counterframing of a “historical lie” (“mentira histórica”), as expressed in the following message:

@epigmenioibarra uf a little late I join #PaseDeLista1al43 because I DON'T forget, DON'T let go and I think that it is a historical LIE the investigation (Cadena, 2015a).

The allegations from protesters about government cover up were substantiated by reports released by the two independent teams that investigated the case, the EAAF (Argentinian Team of Forensic Anthropology) (Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense, 2016) and the GIEI (Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts) (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes, 2016). These two teams, and particularly the GIEI, are portrayed as admired and trustworthy organizations that are praised and appreciated by the *#PaseDeLista1al43* protesters:

#PaseDeLista1al43 When GIEI leaves, my appreciation will leave with them, but my anger will stay with the government (cannfire, 2016).

I believe in @GIEIAYOTZINAPA @eaaoficial @ONUDHmexico Peña and Zerón lie #PaseDeLista1al43 10pm #TrialTomasZeron (Ibarra, 2016b).

There were instances in which particular aspects of the case are discussed more thoroughly by Twitter users. New developments in the investigation sparked conversation about the fundamentals of the case. For example, when the government found the bones of one of the students, the Twitter protesters accused one of the officials in charge of the investigation, Tomás Zerón, of planting that evidence to corroborate the government story, as argued in this tweet:

INVESTIGATE Zerón is an OBLIGATION AND a DEMAND for the State!!

#PaseDeLista1al43 @epigmenioibarra @DuelesMexico (Lady Bitch, 2016).

Additionally, multimedia was often used to share information about the case in the form of videos and photos attached to the tweets, Vimeo or Youtube links (See Figure 9), Periscope transmission links, and links to media outlets news stories (See Figure 10).

***Government's role on the case.*** The online protesters depicted the government as an adversary that is responsible for the disappearance of the students. One of the most repeated phrases in the tweets is “It was the State:”

#Ayotzinapa1año, the open wound #WhereAreThey and the certainty

ItWasTheState. Do you join PasedeLista1al43 10pm? Do you march #26SMx?

(Ibarra, 2015c).

On these tweets, the charges sometime present the state as criminal:

#SpToEng: We forget the missing when the State becomes a complicit criminal:

#PaseDeLista1al43 p/v epigmenioibarra ♥ (Buell, 2015)

Other messages accuse the state of being tyrannical:

When tyranny becomes law, rebellion is a right.’ United for #Ayotzinapa  
@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 @Eponiatowska (Carmina, 2015a).

Some tweets alleged that the responsibility lies on more than one level of government, as can be observed on this post:

One year ago the army and the federals which PeñaNieto commands allowed the municipals to massacre and disappear normalistas PaseDeLista1al43, 10pm (Acosta, 2015b).

Nonetheless, it is the federal government that is most often pointed to as responsible in the protest:

@RT #PaseDeLista1al43 JUSTICE TO VICTIMS AND FAMILY UPON @EPN WITH HIS GOVERNMENT REPRESSOR AND CORRUPT @epigmenioibarra (Silva, 2016).

The federal government is accused of actions ranging from attempting to shelve the case as pointed out in this message:

they wanted to hide it... everything comes to light hopefully they will pay all they deserve #PaseDeLista1al43 (Marin, 2015).

And some other messages denounce that the federal government as lying about the case:

#DayofIndignation #Imarch #PaseDeLista1al43 #peñaout we won't accept the lies from Peña and the pgr! (Herrera Gurrol, 2016).

Two incidents that generated more reactions on the Twitter protests involved the President declaring that people should move on from the moments of pain (“superar”) and when the Attorney General said he was tired (“Ya me cansé”) during a press conference about the case. Many tweets and hashtags alluded to those two comments, for instance:

@epigmenioibarra today more than ever I JOIN and I say PRESENT in the #PaseDeLista1al43 because I DON'T FORGIVE, I DON'T FORGET AND I DON'T LET GO (Cadena, 2015b); and

#IamTired of impunity @epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 (compa maria, 2016).

Tweets called out the government as corrupted and murderous, as shown next:

@epigmenioibarra present #PaseDeLista1al43 today and always for my brothers of Ayotzinapa. No forgiveness, no oblivion! To the murderous government (yeyowan, 2016).

Likewise, protesters accused the federal authorities of having connections with criminal organizations and of being a “narco-government” as expressed in this example:

#Ayotzinapa is the most painful example of the profound symbiosis of organized crime with the Mexican State’: @tryno (Alex, 2016c).

A common demand in the tweets is that President Peña Nieto should resign, as expressed by a Twitter user on this message:

We don’t forget #PasedeLista1al43 10pm WE DON'T GIVE UP with  
@epigmenioibarra every night we demand your resignation EPN (Mora, 2016).

Other posts go even further, demanding that the president should be removed from office and prosecuted in an international court:

#PeñaToTheInternationalCriminalCourt BECAUSE IMPUNITY IN MEXICO  
BECAME THE LAW DUE TO A PRESIDENTIAL DELINQUENT  
#PaseDeLista1Al43 (Alex, 2016a).

Members of Peña Nieto's cabinet are also criticized. For example, Attorney General, Jesús Murillo Karam is disparaged on tweets such as this:

Today, 10 pm 3PaseDeLista1al43 with the lie of @EPN and Murillo Karam more evident than ever (Astillero, 2016).

Likewise, Tomás Zerón, member of the official investigation team, was criticized:

#PaseDeLista1al43 parents demand destitution of Zeron and JUDGE AND INCARCERATED @epigmenioibarra bit.ly/1Tzk9bq (Miguel, 2016).

As mentioned before, protesters accused Zerón of planting evidence to favor their version of events regarding the students:

@epigmenioibarra PaseDeLista1al43 ForTheCreatorsofTheLie  
ForThoseWhoPlantEvidence cover crimi #ForPeñaZeronandMurilloPunishment  
(Luis RG, 2016a).

Moreover, another organization that was the focus of accusations is the Army, along with General Salvador Cienfuegos, head of the Secretary of Defense. “It was the Army” is a phrase that prevails in the body of messages studied, for example:

Because forgetting is the same as forgiveness #PaseDeLista1al43 2 years of the Massacre there are proofs It was the Army! @epigmenioibarra @nvergaraleon  
(garcia, 2016).

This point of view regarding the events of the disappearance counter the “historical truth” portrayed by the authorities, which mainly pointed to criminal organizations as responsible for what happened to the students.

**Street protests.** Street protests about the case are talked about in three ways: mentioning future protests, demonstrations, or events; sharing information about previous

protests; and making a connection between street protests and the online protest.

Regarding future protests, tweets with photos attached served as invitations for protests that will take place in the coming days and include information about time and location (See Figure 11). Other events associated with the case such as art shows, conferences, panels, and films are also announced in a similar manner. For example, the following message invites other Twitter users to the screening of a documentary:

#Laomisión  screening #Chi43+3 #Ayotzinapa2years @PlantonxAyotzi  
#pasedelista1al43 (#Yosoy132Chitown, 2016).

As the example above illustrates, these events took place not only in Mexico, but also in other parts of the world. Users also state that they will go to the announced events and try to persuade others to join:

#PaseDeLista1al43 We have named them and we are going to the MARCH  
#September26 From the Angel to Zócalo 4 pm #AyotzinapaTwoYears  
#Ayotzinapa (Compa Liliana, 2016).

Protests and demonstrations that have already taken place are often shown in tweets through photographs and videos. These images depict crowds on the streets, protest signs, close ups of protesters, and altars with candles and photos of the students. Videos contain fragments of speeches performed during these events or show people marching on the streets. Tweets with these images and videos serve two purposes. First, they help to spread information about what happened during protests (Figure 12). Second, images of protests are often used simply to accompany the tweets with the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 to add a graphic element to the Twitter message, regardless of when the protest took place (See Figure 13). Some specific photos are used repeatedly for

several days. Out of the 3,616 tweets analyzed, 1,651 (45.7%) had at least one image attached. Although many of these images were illustrations or photos of the students, many others were images of the protests on the streets. In this way, online protest tweets are associated with the street protests and embedded in the overall fight or cause concerning the Ayotzinapa missing students. This relationship is explicitly articulated in some tweets that claim that *#PaseDeLista1al43* is as an extension of the physical marches:

We overflowed the streets. We overflowed the net. Vs Oblivion and silence  
PaseDeLista1al43 10pm Who and why join... fb.me/6mhvFrTZL (Sánchez-Reyna, 2015) (Also see Figure 14).

As the exemplar above illustrates, for the Twitter users on this network there is an explicit conception of using social media, via an online Twitter protest, as an extension of what occurs with the overall Ayotzinapa case.

**Mexican sociopolitical context.** The Twitter protesters often referred to aspects of the Mexican sociopolitical context that were not directly connected to the students' case. This theme was talked about in three ways. Participants in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter conversation discussed the political and social conditions in the country in broad terms, focused on some specific events that were perceived to be similar to the disappearance of the students, and called for revolution and violence.

**Social and political conditions in Mexico.** Opinions and broad evaluations about the Mexican sociopolitical context were often present in the tweets using the hashtag. The concerns shared about violent conditions in Mexico is an example:

DeniseDresserG: Here #PasedeLista1al43 to protest against the country of graves that we have become. epig... (lapoliticamexico, 2016).

These tweets often used terms related to violent conditions: for example, blood, pain, wound, and torture. Examples of tweets that used these terms are included below:

- *Blood*:

From Texas we don't forget #PaseDeLista1al43 #Ayotzinapa and for all the blooded country @epigmenioibarra (McLarenRacingF1, 2016);

- *Pain*:

They won't live enough to enjoy what they have obtained at the expense of our pain @epigmenioibarra #PaseDelista1al43 #RevolutionMx (FrancoMX, 2015a);

- *Wound*:

For those who massacre, and deceive this wounded nation, there will be NoForgivenessNoOblivion! PaseDeLista1al43 (Acosta, 2015c);

- *Torture*:

Not only have they taken away the 43, They also tortured the dignity and justice of Mexico... ready from Guadalajara #PaseDeLista1al43 (ALEJANDRO, 2016).

More specific tweets addressed the large number of missing people in Mexico besides the 43, as in the following message:

@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 + more than 25000 missing in this country of impunity #NoForgivenessNoOblivion (Soto, 2015);

Some posts referred to the prevalence of homicides in the country:

And you Mexican how many death people do you need to wake up to reality? Join #PaseDeLista1al43 @epigmenioibarra (CANALLA, 2016a).

Likewise, in few cases, images attached to the tweets also contained visuals that made reference to violent conditions, presenting photos of dead people who were victims of crimes (See Figure 15). The connection between the missing 43 and the Mexican sociopolitical context conveyed that the event of the disappearance was not an isolated case, as manifested in the next message:

#México Remember ... We are missing #43 and thousands more. May our voice be heard at the #PaseDelista1al43 @epigmenioibarra (Buendia, 2015b) (Also see Figure 16).

Moreover, additional social issues addressed in the tweets included citizens' apathy in Mexico about social and political problems and the need for more awareness about these issues:

@epigmenioibarra Me! It would be unforgivable to have a position of indifference as citizens, in the disappearances #PaseDelista1al43 (Freites, 2015); and

#PaseDeLista1al43 History exceeded you misters who ruleMexico. Evilness is common in power. Down here, we keep creating consciousness (orozco, 2016).

By addressing these sociopolitical conditions, the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest presented participants with an opportunity to express discontent with the overall course of the country, in addition to focusing on the missing students.

**Specific cases.** The #PaseDeLista1al43 hashtag was utilized to demand justice and question the government's actions in regard to other high profile cases—old and new—that took place in the country. The anniversary of the students' disappearance on September 26<sup>th</sup> almost coincides with the anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre of

students in 1968 on October 2<sup>nd</sup> (in fact, the Ayotzinapa students were on their way to Mexico City to commemorate this event). Thus, some tweets alluded often to the earlier event:

#HandsofLove Hands of Love ♡ at #PaseDeLista1al43 Ayotzinapa is not forgotten! October 2 of 68 We don't forget our students 🇲🇽 (xmax444, 2015b).

More recent situations were also brought up in the tweets. One of them was an incident in which 49 children were burned in a fire at a daycare in 2009 due to negligence of the state government, known as the *Guardería ABC* case or *ABC*:

@epigmenioibarra #HappyChildrenDay? We are missing 25girls24boys who shouldn't have died. For them PaseDeLista1al43 10pm MASSIVERT (Luis RG, 2016b).

Roll calls with the names of the children who died at that incident were conducted on Twitter sometimes in a similar way to those about Ayotzinapa. Another issue that received attention during one of the moments analyzed is the 2014 imprisonment of the community leader José Manuel Mireles, who was head of the self-defense forces against narco groups:

#MirelesFreeNow BECAUSE WHEN SOMETHING IS IMPORTANT IT HURTS STOP IMPUNITY IN MEXICO! #PaseDeLista1al43 (Alex, 2016b).

Assassination of reporters and police repression during civil protests were also focus of criticism by Twitter users in the moments analyzed. Government negligence or direct involvement was the common thread of these events and their connection to the 43 missing students' issue.

**Calls for revolution and violence.** A few tweets addressed the need for a revolution and violence to improve the conditions in Mexico. The following tweet exemplifies this sentiment:

From DF PaseDeLista1al43 @epigmenioibarra When tiranny is law revolution is order #Ayozinapa19months (Vazquez, 2016).

Although many tweets had a rebellious tone overall, a few actually called for violence. For those who expressed this perspective, violent means were options in light of the prevailing situation of oppression and injustice:

PRESENT #PaseDeLista1al43 A people with hunger for justice usually takes it violently Not1more @epigmenioibarra (Esbejar, 2016).

This kind of tweets also contained praises for leaders of the Mexican Revolution (See Figure 17) and called for war and revenge:

They might disappear men, but the ideas shall follow them until they pay with their blood for their crime #PaseDeLista1al43 (FrancoMX, 2015b).

**#PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter protests.** Besides speaking about the case of the students, many of the tweets referred to the Twitter protest itself. Mainly, the messages concerned features of the protest, reasons to participate in the protest, and few negative tweets that rejected the protest.

**Features of the protest.** Tweets using the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 referred to the Twitter protest itself. These messages addressed different aspects or features of the daily social media *Roll Call*. Typical tweets within this sub-theme indicated the time at which the online protest begins, called upon people to join, and asked Twitter users to invite their followers to participate:

Let's join voices, #PaseDeLista1al43 22hrs 43 families destroyed... One, two, three... forty and three JUSTICE! (sanchez, 2015).

Another common feature of these tweets was tagging celebrities or other Twitter users who are regular participants in the protest to encourage them to join on a particular day and invite people in their network:

Do we join voices to name them,wills to not forget them!@gimenezcacho  
@tapiaFernanda @anticorrucion\_ @DamianAlcazar #PaseDeLista1al43 10pm?  
(Ibarra, 2015b).

When addressing celebrities, some of these tweets made reference to the prestige that these people have (and along with that a high amount of followers) and discussed how this popularity could attract more people to the demonstration. Some tweets also attempted to get the attention of international media or international figures by tagging their accounts:

PeopleUnitedWillNeverBeDefeated! #MirelesFreeNow #PaseDeLista1sl43 10pm  
#StayGIEI @epigmenioibarra @elpais\_américa (González, 2016).

Another strategy to get help from celebrities was to assign a celebrity one student to retweet each night:

Dear @Taibo2 today I tag you No1 from #PaseDeLista1al43  
AbelGarciaHernandez. I appreciate you support me giving RT" (Ibarra, 2016c).

Messages of encouragement to continue participating in the *Roll Call* were also recurrent in the tweets analyzed. The most common phrases used were related to uniting voices for the protest, calls to not stopping and giving up, and reassurance to avoid getting tired of the daily *Roll Call*:

@epigmenioibarra Despite two years without knowing the truth, don't give up!

Present!!! PasedeLista1al43 (Jimenez, 2016).

In light of these motivational claims, Twitter users responded by saying “Present” and indicating the place from where they were joining in:

@epigmenioibarra present #PaseDeLista1al43 from coatzacoalcos #ImTired29  
(Aleman, 2015).

Additionally, references to Epigmenio Ibarra were also observed throughout the five moments analyzed, some of which thanked him for his efforts in organizing and maintaining the daily protest:

Thanks Don @epigmenioibarra for your effort all year and especially today  
#DayOfIndignation ; #PaseDeLista1al43 (COMPA PANCHO, 2015).

Changes of schedule and information regarding the times and Twitter accounts of people who conducted other similar smaller protests were also characteristic of these tweets:

Due to force majeure I'm forced to start today #PaseDeLista1al43 at 23:00,  
@epigmenioibarra (CompaAlérgico al PRI, 2015).

Some Twitter users conducted the *Roll Call* on their own, posting illustrations of the face and name of the students, or even just their names as exemplified in the next message:

#Pasedelista1al43 #Ayotzinapasomostodos #Yamecanse25 11. César Manuel González Hernández (Reneé, 2015).

Similarly, other tweets pertaining to this theme simply counted from 1 to 43:

#PaseDeLista1al43 #1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23  
24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 (#Antiimperialista,  
2015).

Notably, Twitter users utilizing the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* explicitly referred to the use of social media for their demonstration. Some tweets simply provided an explanation about how to participate in the protest:

We join voices and accounts at *#PaseDeLista1al43* 10pm via @epigmenioibarra (Fundacion Find, 2015).

Yet, other tweets talked about the hashtags that should be promoted in that particular moment:

Retweeted epigmenioibarra (@epigmenioibarra) Today PaseDelista1al43 10pm with 2 HT: *#GIEILeavesWeStay* fb.me/2LthLTmn (lopez, 2016).

The messages also stressed that Twitter allowed them to contribute to the cause, continuing what was started on the street protests and inundating the network with the students' faces and names. This association was expressed in the following posts:

We overflown the streets. Let's overflow now the network. Vs oblivion and silence PaseDeLista1al43 10pm Who and why you... fb.me/6mhvFrTZL (Sánchez-Reyna, 2015);

*#PaseDeLista1al43* two years since the disappearance 43 hours for the 43 May their faces inundate the network *#Ayotzinapa Justice! Let's Begin!* (Canudas, 2016).

For these two users, the Twitter protest serves as a tool to disrupt the social media platform with the topic of the students' disappearance.

***Reasons to participate.*** When explicitly discussing the online protests, several tweets focused on the reasons to participate in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* conversation. Among the motivations mentioned to take part of the protest were the following: to keep

the case in the public memory, to demand justice for the students and to know the truth about what happened to them, and to show solidarity with the students' parents.

Additionally, participation was encouraged using the justification that anyone in the country could be the next victim, and that people needed to cope with feelings about the case. The protest is often referred to as an "exercise of memory:"

Today, 10 pm, in this persistent exercise of memory , #PaseDeLista1al43 from the account of @epigmenioibarra (Astillero, 2015).

According to its contributors, one of the demonstration's purpose is to keep the public from forgetting about the students' disappearance because "to forget is to forgive." A common phrase utilized is "No forgiveness, No oblivion":

@epigmenioibarra @EPN Always #Present n #PaseDeLista1l43 #AyotziLives bc  
#NoForgivenessNoOblivion unl there is justice for #The43Normalistas (Yáñez Flores, 2015).

Moreover, according to the tweets, "to forget is to be complicit" of the situation:

@epigmenioibarra Because to forget is to be complicit PaseDeLista1al43 (zarco gon, 2015).

Thus, this demonstration is perceived to be a commitment or duty to fulfill, as expressed in the next post:

@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 because we are #Missing43 this is not a fad, it is a duty!! (Jackez, 2015).

Likewise, the Twitter protests was continually referred to as a "fight" that belongs to everyone:

@carlossalces @epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43

#TheBigHomelandIsAyotzinapa Unity Fight Battle and Victory ‘only the people can save the people (Goncalves, 2015).

The concepts of justice and truth are present throughout the five moments studied. The tweets with these sub-themes usually focus on the urgency of justice and truth as the following tweets express:

#PaseDelista1al43 Ayotzinapa must be the epicenter of Mexican justice, we must know the truth! (urbina, 2016);

@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 Where is the truth and the boys? it is impossible that it is not known after almost two years (Alfredo, 2016a).

The emphasis on the need for truth is connected to the idea that there is intent on the part of the government to shelve the case and to lie about the issue:

I join, from Zumpango to #PaseDeLista1al43 to scream to the government that we wont allow shelving to the Ayotzinapa case (Zamora Oaxaca, 2015).

The demonstration, according to the tweets, thus has the purpose of fighting misinformation spread about the case:

Here #pasedelista1al43to fight against the lie, the tergiversation, the bad faith that some treat the case with which some treat the case (Dresser, 2015);

The protests also help spread social awareness on the issue:

SOS #UntilTheLastBreath react #PaseDeLista1al43 @epigmenioibarra  
@Omarel44 @lhan55 @AnonymousMex\_ @TuiteraMx @diazpol @adiazpi  
@ULibres (Gonzalez Bax, 2016);

And demonstrations inform the world about this tragedy:

It is not about making a TT but to make the country and the world know that we don't forget it, we don't let go. #PaseDeLista1al43 10pm (Buendia, 2015a).

In fact, a small portion of the tweets were written in languages other than Spanish, mainly English and German:

RT LolaReinadelSur: Wo istg 35 LUIS A FRANCISCO Ich warte auf ihn!  
#Ayotzinapa #Mex #PaseDeLista1al43 #ImTired... (Noticias Ayotzinapa, 2015a).

Along with the desire to know the truth about the case, justice for the people responsible for the forced disappearance is a common demand manifested in the online protest.

Demands for truth and justice were stressed as one of the reasons to keep coming back to tweet every night:

Being silent is being accomplices #PaseDeLista1al43 we demand truth and justice punishment to those who corrupt, murder and disappear @epigmenioibarra (Cruz, 2016).

By underscoring and digitally sharing these demands for truth and for the justice, the protest counteracts governmental claims that the “truth” has been established.

The parents of the 43 students are acknowledged as important parts of the protest. The parents are often praised for their strength and braveness in the search for their children, for example:

@epigmenioibarra OshitoBlanko I invite you to #PaseDeLista1al43 to show solidarity with the fight of these brave parents for truth and justice (trota mundos, 2015b).

Likewise, the pain and struggle that the parents have experienced are recognized:

The pain of their parents doesn't stop. Neither does their fight. On the streets and on the network we tell them: You are not alone PaseDeLista1a43 (Acosta, 2015a). References to the parents are often accompanied by links to videos of their speeches, illustrations with their quotes, or photos of their faces. These graphics present the mothers and fathers in two ways: highlighting their pain and sadness (See Figure 18) and emphasizing their unyielding conviction to go on (See Figure 19). Thus, the *Roll Call* is a vehicle to express solidarity with the parents, as shown in the following posts:

@epigmenioibarra may my voice keep alive the hope that the parents keep looking until they found them PaseDeLista1al43 10 pm (SAGM, 2015);  
The online demonstration served as a platform for protesters to express different emotions about the disappearance of the students. Some of these emotions are exemplified in the following tweets.

*-Outrage:*

#PaseDeLista1al43 22:00 including 25girls24boys who should not have died. Our sadness and outrage are manifest @epigmenioibarra (Moreno, 2016).

*-Pain:*

We are not stuck with #Ayotzinapa, we have it through our soul because it aches  
#PaseDeLista1al43 23:00 via @epigmenioibarra (Davies, 2015).

*-Sadness:*

Each day that I do #PaseDeLista1al43 I feel + and more sadness! We have to do this reflection every day! And do more! Thanks @epigmenioibarra (Gasé, 2015).

*-Anger:*

@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 22hrs because we can't let go nor forgive all this grievance let's say with anger FueraPeña (mercado m, 2016).

-*Love*:

@epigmenioibarra "Eren\_thailandmx Ready #PaseDeLista1al43 with more will and love! Justice! Freedom! @EPN (Paz, 2015).

-*Hope*:

#PaseDeLista1al43 There is no forgiveness nor oblivion there's still Hope that doesn't die @epigmenioibarra @cindy\_prz @dennorpg (Peyranovich, 2015).

Additionally, emojis, exclamation signs, and “all caps” were utilized as ways to express emotion in posts. The tweets above convey how the authors suffered personal emotional repercussions from the Ayotzinapa case, which motivates them to continue expressing their sentiments in the online protest. These daily affective demonstrations allow posters to feel their way into the story and position themselves as part of the events, beyond a mere rational discussion of the situation as a human rights violation or a narcotraffic related issue.

Related to the latter motivation, another motivation to continue the online protest was the idea that what happened to the students could happen to anyone. These messages state that the next missing people could be “your kids” or even “you.” The following tweets exemplify this aspect:

Inviting to #PaseDeLista1al43 because if they were my kids I would not stop asking what happened to them. epigmenioibarra (Contreras, 2015);  
The 44 could be you, me, or your close family #PaseDeLista1al43 (Yagaxovich, 2016).

In this way, the Twitter users also position themselves as part of the story. On the one hand, this rationale goes along with the idea that the protest was for the 43 students but that it went beyond that, honoring the thousands of missing people in Mexico. But also, this reasoning shows that the people tweeting saw a personal connection with the victims of the disappearance, addressing their own vulnerability of suffering a similar destiny.

**Rejection of #PaseDeLista1al43.** Although the messages analyzed were generally supportive of the protests, a few tweets were critical of the use of the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43*. Authors of these tweets expressed their rejection of the protest:

I've said it @epigmenioibarra and his #PaseDelista1al43 piss me and I don't care about them equally! Really don't give RT, that's why I don't follow this carmen salinas ! (Rodriguez, 2015).

Another tweet called the use of the hashtag ridiculous:

We barely have half a month and they already made up this ridiculous hashtag -> #PaseDeLista1al43 xD (Hypatia, 2015),

And another message considered the protest unproductive:

@epigmenioibarra @TapiaFernanda @DeniseDresserG @lydiacachosi  
@ilianafox @IlseSalas #PaseDeLista1al43 WedontaccomplishanythingwithRT  
(Leon P., 2015).

Moreover, there were tweets attacking the participants of the *Roll Call*:

Definitely, when I see that #PaseDeLista1al43 on Twittter is a sign to go to sleep.  
Because some start to ramble (Underdog1987, 2015).

Some tweets accused participants of only trying to get attention and of exploiting and profiting from the case:

The #PaseDeLista1al43 is a way in which certain scroungers take advantage of disgrace to get attention (Peñabot Abarrotero, 2015b).

And some messages denounced a political interest behind the protest demands:

If your #PaseDeLista1al43 didn't have political agenda, you would do a roll call for the other 27,000 missing @DeniseDresser (Gómez, 2015).

Some of the key actors involved in the case or the Twitter protests were also criticized.

One of the independent group in charge of investigating the case, GIEI, was accused of corruption:

Full of \$\$ @GIEIAYOTZINAPA leaves throwing their last charge: It was the State @DeniseDresserG #PaseDeLista1al43 (García, 2016).

The organizer of the protest, Ibarra, was criticized as well for his work as producer of soap operas:

The #PaseDeLista1al43 is a way to get attention on the part of the 'so-called writer of second-rate soap operas from Argos' (Peñabot Abarrotero, 2015a).

Nevertheless, this point of view was marginal in the overall body of tweets analyzed.

**Hashtags as frames.** Hashtags, a popular feature of Twitter messages, work as framing devices in which Twitter users can articulate their main issues when participating in a networked conversation (Papacharissi, 2016). The most used hashtags in tweets with #PaseDeLista1al43 are presented in Table 6. In total, 593 different hashtags were used in the five moments analyzed; however, 538 (90.7%) of them were used only one time. Additionally, some of these hashtags varied only by a letter or a number, or had similar ideas, but were phrased in a different order. Table 6 presents only the hashtags that appeared 10 times or more. As can be observed, the hashtags that were used echoed the

results of the thematic analysis in terms of the main concerns within the online protest. The phrase “Ya me cansé” (I am tired), alluding to the attorney general’s statement during a press conference, was made into a hashtag that was popular in the conversation using *#PaseDeLista1al43*. Although in the original source it was used to imply that the person was physically tired of answering questions, the phrase was re-appropriated for the hashtag to imply that the author of the tweet was tired of the situation surrounding the disappearance of the students. Different variations of the hashtags were produced by adding different numbers at the end of the hashtag (e.g., #Yamecanse25, #Yamecanse26).

The role of the authority was underscored through several hashtags like #FueElEstado (#ItWasTheState) and #FueElEjercito (#ItWasTheArmy), in which the federal government is pointed as responsible for the disappearance. Criticism of the president is expressed with hashtags such as #PeñaNietoNoteHagasMenso (#PeñaNietoDontPlayDumb), #PeñaNietoTieneQueIrse (#PeñaNietoHasToGo), #PeñaKiller, and #ElCorruptoenlaONU (#TheCorruptattheUN), in reference to a visit he made to the United Nations headquarters.

The role of the independent investigators is evident in Moment 4 with the hashtags #InformeGIEI (#GIEIReport) and #TomasZeron (who was accused by the GIEI of irregularities in the official investigations). Other hashtags related to these two topics that were tweeted during this period were #JuicioaTomasZeron (#TrialTomasZeron) #TomasZembron (#TomasPlanter)—a play on the last name and the accusation that he planted evidence—as well as #QuedateGIEI (#StayGIEI) and #GraciasGIEI (#ThanksGIEI). Some hashtags emphasized not forgetting about the missing students—#NiPerdonNiOlvido (#NoforgivenessNoOblivion)—and that fighting for this cause is

everyone's responsibility, #AyotzinapaSomosTodos (#AyotzinapaIsEveryone). Likewise, characteristics of the daily protests and basic aspects of the case were underscored through hashtags such as #10pm and #Ayotzinapa2años (#Ayotzinapa2years). Lastly, some hashtags unrelated to the topic were included, likely as a way to bring attention to the protest by tapping into trending topics going on at the moment (for instance #SuperBloodMoon and #Superbowl).

#### **RQ4. What Role do Protest Participants Perceive that Traditional Media Play in the Ayotzinapa case and on the Dynamics of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Networked Public?**

This question aims to investigate the perspective of protesters of #PaseDeLista1al43 on the role of traditional media on the Ayotzinapa case and on the digital demonstration. To answer this question, a deductive thematic analysis was conducted on 14 interviews with protest participants. Results indicate that, from the protesters' viewpoint, traditional media are complicit with the government and so they denounce that media's work in covering the disappearance of the 43 students as negligent and biased. Thus, the possibility of using Twitter as an alternative channel to share information about the issue is considered essential. Yet, participants also acknowledged that they utilize information from traditional media sources to disseminate on Twitter, thus acting as curators of the news that circulates on #PaseDeLista1al43 conversation about the topic.

**Denouncing traditional media.** A common assertion among interviewees is that media, or a section of the media, are complicit with the government. According to the participants' perspectives, this partnership derives from the dependence of the media on

income from government propaganda, which ultimately impacts their journalistic work.

This relationship is denounced in the following quote:

The degree of corruption is immeasurable, is rife in all media, and all are controlled and monitored by the government, and they say what it wishes us to know, conveniently (Interview 6).

The interviewee in the next passage agrees with the idea that the media is controlled, and denounces the false perspective that media organizations portray about the country:

Yes, unfortunately the media is controlled by the government, they will never speak to you of that, for them that Mexico does not exist, no! For them it is a completely different Mexico, as if Mexico was a modern country, like Europe or the United States, they have never gone out of their pink cloud (Interview 12).

For the participant in the next quote, the misrepresentation of the political and social conditions in Mexico is a consequence of media's dependence on government propaganda, which is pointed out as one of the causes for media's deficient work:

Many of the reporters published illogical things, yes? In favor of the PGR versions (*the Attorney General's office*), I said, "well, something is happening", right? [...] What is very serious is that there are budget cuts in health and education, but there is something that is not touched, and what is not touched is the expenses on official propaganda. Do you know how much money the government of Mexico spends on official propaganda a year? [...] between six and seven thousand million pesos [...] *Televisa* and *TV Azteca* take 32% of the total. This spending on advertising, on official propaganda is 30 times what the government devotes to human rights. [...]. Why not use that money better in

doing the things that must be done and then you do not need to pay to media?  
(Interview 9).

As the passages above exemplify, the idea that the media are subject to government influence or control is a recurrent complaint of the protesters. As such, given the perceived complicity between traditional media—TV and radio being accused most often—the journalistic coverage about the investigation of the case and the citizen protests is perceived as biased. The media are perceived to be depicting the protests about Ayotzinapa in an unfair light so that they can remain on the good side with the government, as articulated by one interviewee in the next quote:

We need to work with the tools we have, there are many media that are not interested in (*the case*), or they are even affected by the fact that this type of information, or that such tantrums, as they call them in some places, are happening. Eh, or simply, they just see it as something that will affect their relationship with the government, and do not participate, they refuse it, and even reject the fact that this is happening or has happened (Interview 2).

The next passage provides an example of how the media coverage of marches on the streets for the cause of Ayotzinapa is unfair, according to this participant:

In September I went to the year-long march of Ayotzinapa. I recorded video, I went walking the whole march to see how much the people of Mexico supported the mothers and fathers of the 43. Later if you like I share the videos I took. When I see on official TV, yes? 17 thousand people supporting the march. What 17 thousand? Reforma was filled from the Angel to the Zocalo. What's more, I have people living in other parts of the country. And some called me and said, hey, it

was very few, and I told them, you have no idea, what very few? “It’s that the media here say that.” It’s not true, and I sent them the videos, and they told me “it’s that these media do not report anything” (Interview 10).

According to this perspective, the media distort public perception about the Ayotzinapa case. The first interviewee even describes the negative manner in which she perceives that some media portrays their demonstration as a tantrum. In that sense, protesters believe that traditional media organizations work against their cause trying to deny or minimize what is happening with the case.

**Using Twitter as alternative.** In light of the problematic performance of many media organizations, Twitter is considered by protesters to be a useful alternative to counter the messages from traditional media because, “Twitter is a relief valve to all this injustice, it is not yet so censored by EPN’s (*President Enrique Peña Nieto*) justice system” (Interview 6). In the next passages, a participant articulates the potential of using Twitter for keeping the topic of Ayotzinapa present:

Some recent news about Julio César Mondragón, now they are saying that he wasn’t tortured, it was a wild animal, it was a dog or whatever. That’s the kind of thing, you know, pieces of news are embedded in Pase de Lista. It’s not the same, it’s fluid, and it means that every time some atrocity happens in Mexico or some injustice or some change of policy or another mentira histórica happens then we know about it because if you follow the lista, not everyday, but just every other day you start to build up a picture of not just Ayotzinapa but just what’s happening in Mexico (Interview 8).

In the previous quote, the interviewee explains how false news that comes out about the case (e.g., the student not being tortured, but attacked by a wild animal) is countered with the information that circulates on Twitter in the #PaseDeLista1al43 protest. According to this perspective, if Twitter users follow the stream of #PaseDeLista1al43 tweets, they can stay up-to-date with the 43 students issue. Next, a protest participant talks about the reach that the digital protest can have:

That is to say, hundreds of thousands of users observe the messages of the daily *Roll Call*. That is very relevant because I can assure you that there are many newspapers of the most important ones that do not have that impact (Interview 4). Moreover, another interviewee considers Twitter as a vehicle for protesters to provide the news themselves:

I feel that the press today is behind schedule. They say around: now we give the news. So, both in the streets and if you have contact with, as I said, no? With some of the people that are, let's say, more visible in the movements, well, sometimes also that information can be shared and from there also take action (Interview 9).

As shown above, interviewees find that Twitter can substitute for what is lacking in traditional media: “if media do not speak, the networks will speak” (Interview 2). Through Twitter, protesters can disseminate information to counter what is released in other mediums. In this way, the #PaseDeLista1al43 conversation can serve as an always-on online home for the movement, where people can turn when they need to catch-up with what is taking place with the missing 43 students issue. Furthermore, interviewees also perceive that the social media platform has advantages over more conventional type

of media outlets, in terms of speed and reach. Many of the interviewees pointed out the relevance of keeping this information flowing on the social media platform, to spark conversation about the issue both nationally and internationally:

I think for me I suppose it was the idea that you can cross borders and we can use Internet to show solidarity in quite a meaningful way, well I hope is meaningful [...] I think it is really important to make sure that he (*the Mexican president*) understands that there is a presence and every time something happens, whether is Osorio Chong (*the Minister of Interior*) or whoever else is in the frame that they know that there are people out there spreading the word and that it doesn't just happen in Mexico that I'm here (*Europe*) and I know that there are people retweeting in other parts (Interview 8).

Unlike other media, Twitter's characteristics allowed users to reach distant others with the hope of informing them about the 43 missing students. As such, the protesters believed that knowledge about the issue disseminated worldwide could help pressure the Mexican government to solve the case.

**Disseminating traditional media information.** Despite the distrust of Mexican media, participants acknowledged that they rely on media sources to stay informed and spread news about the Ayotzinapa case. Several interviewees claimed that they go beyond the retweeting of tweets by incorporating not only their own opinions about the issue, but also by gathering and sharing new information involving the Ayotzinapa students. They perceive that there is independent journalism in Mexico that is credible, and therefore, they take stories from such sources to spread their news on the digital protest. In the passages below, two interviewees share this point of view:

Of course, of course, yes, you hear an “official” medium give the same news and you hear a person like the ones I tell you about, like Carmen Aristegui, for us she is the best journalist that we have in Mexico, and I think an example to follow, in honesty, and the news have different edges, the “official” medium says something happened, and Aristegui says, it cannot be, here is the evidence (Interview 11).

There are journalists that are independent, that do their investigations right, so, with base on trustable sources, well, we come to realize of the things that happen in Mexico and well, we will report it to the people really, and really you can influence a lot of people on Twitter (Interview 12).

These examples mentioned credible media sources, such as the current affairs magazine *Proceso* and the site of journalist Carmen Aristegui, which are both known as left-leaning and thus coincide with the ideology that many protesters support. Other media outlets that protesters mentioned were international organizations like *BBC* and *El País*. Furthermore, the way in which information from these sources spreads varies. Many protesters simply attach a link to a news story or a photo, but others create their own images (and in some cases videos) with editing software and attach them to tweets. The images created by protesters have different formats and some are even signed by the Twitter users to identify them as authors. Some images include fragments of news stories with screenshots from news media websites, others take pieces of information about the case and include their own perspective on the story, and others include information about a coming event. These efforts are explained below by two participants:

I try to find the news of the day about Ayotzinapa and send it before the *Roll Call*.

A message with the story of the day, or on a topic of interest, or if there was an

exhibition. For example, today I sent one about Ayotzinapa and Ferguson, that there are similarities between the two cases, so then I share it and I do see response. And to those that retweet it, I send the information more personalized So, well, in the absence of eh, in the absence of what really happens in Mexico through the open communication media, both radio and television, well, I intend to send, at this level now, yes, global, what I, as a simple citizen, notice (Interview 5).

I do my own tweets. I take images from Google, or wherever there are images, but I write on top of those images whatever new information I can find (Interview 3).

In the quotes above, the interviewees explain how they have appropriated Internet and social media affordances to have a more active role on the *Roll Call*, by acting as curators of news stories about Ayotzinapa, disseminating news through Twitter, and creating their own content with images from the web. The goal of this type of actions, as it is for the *Roll Call* in general, is to raise awareness about the topic.

### **RQ5: What Elements of Counterpublics are Present in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Protests?**

This question sought to investigate whether the #PaseDeLista1al43 protests constituted a counterpublic. A deductive thematic analysis was conducted from the 14 interviews with participants of the protests and from the tweets of the five moments selected for study to identify elements characteristic of counterpublics. Results of these analyses indicate that #PaseDeLista1al43 contains the following discursive elements that can be construed as features of counterpublics (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015): 1) messages in which the protesters deconstruct power relations in the mainstream public sphere, and

denounce how those power relations work against them; 2) messages that challenge the consensus of the mainstream public sphere; and 3) messages that seek to strengthen the collective identity of the group. Additionally, another counterpublic element identified in the *#PaseDeLista1al43* network is the development of strategies to infiltrate the mainstream public (Graham & Smith, 2016) in two ways: 1) as a training ground to reflect and articulate reactions about the students' case and issues similar to the case; and 2) as a space to conduct disruptive agitational activities (Fraser, 1990). Each of these elements is described in more detail below.

**Deconstructing power relations.** This element of counterpublics refers to instances in which participants of the *#PaseDeLista1al43* protests explicitly addressed power relations within the media, politics, and society; attempted to set themselves apart from the mainstream and dominant messages; and denounced how such power relations work against them. Contributors to the *#PaseDeLista1al43* protest denounced these power dynamics by underscoring the corrupt relationship they perceived exists between media and government, as well as the attempt by the government to cover-up the involvement of the military in the disappearance of the students. Additionally, protesters decried efforts by the government to combat their online protest with regulation, cyber-attacks, and through mainstream media.

As explained in the previous section, a corrupt relationship between media and government is a fundamental assumption of *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protesters. According to this perspective, a sector of Mexican media is submissive to political elites and thus the information the media disseminate is meant to manipulate the public's perception. As one interview participant noted: "The country's open or sold media are

engaged in spreading lies” (Interview 5). Specifically, the protesters criticized the media as being a propaganda apparatus for the federal government. The following tweets show efforts to expose such dynamics:

In front of the corrosive work of the media and attempts of @EPN to delete our memory we start Pasedelista1al43 now! (Luis RG, 2015);

Thousand of millions of pesos, from our taxes, spent by @EPN to delete our memory. PaseDeLista1al43 10pm vs oblivion RT (Ibarra, 2015e).

According to the protesters, the federal government utilizes this influence to hide information about the students’ case. For instance, #PaseDeLista1al43 messages often identifies issues that the government refuses to pursue, such as the involvement of the Army in the night of the students’ disappearance:

Investigate the Army for Ayotzinapa case!! <http://t.co/PFs2mKvqi5> #YaMeCansé25 #PaseDeLista1al43 (Miroslava, 2015).

Likewise, the following interviewee explains how the government has been reticent to acknowledge the possibility that the Army is linked to the students’ disappearance.

It (*the government*) has not wanted anyone approaching the military headquarters. That is a crucial issue because the barracks have crematoria and then it is something that was so precise, but the GIEI said that all the crematoria in the region had to be checked. Iguala, from Iguala to Acapulco, a wide radio in all of Iguala, and obviously crematories of the barracks were included, which is a very important issue in which the government has not wanted to ventilate the, how, it obtained some information. How Tomás Zerón participated in the location of the remains of Alexander Mora (Interview 10).

Beyond exposing power relations in Mexico and how they impact the students' case, the analysis of tweets and responses from interviews also revealed that protesters perceived these power relations to specifically work against them. The main concern respondents manifested was that the political elite seek to interfere with the freedom of expression that protesters enjoy via the Internet and social media. Some of these efforts at censorship and silencing opposition come in the form of attempts to change legislation to punish certain type of speech online, as explained by the interviewees:

They have tried to regulate social networks without success, but there have been several attempts to regulate, in quotes, because what they are trying to do is contain social protest in social networks. You surely have, you have, you will have some information about it, I suppose. You see that they even wanted to sanction if you accuse an official, that is, things that are already absurd, it is a censorship, attempts at absolute censorship (Interview 4).

A perspective that coincides with the criticism of the previous participant is shown below:

There was another initiative, well, an initiative of the most obtuse, on the part of a Senator from the PAN (*National Action Party*) in the chamber, where he wanted to criminalize, yes? People who in social networks attack the government. This was, there was a scandal and luckily it could be stopped due to how illogical it was, but for the same reason as the only target that they have not controlled is that of social networks, they want to control it. That is why only in social networks you can find out the reality of what is happening in Mexico (Interview 10).

Additionally, the Twitter protest bemoaned specific online attacks against #PaseDeLista1al43 protest in the form of Twitter bots that seek to diminish the power of their hashtag. The protesters particularly perceive that @epigmenioibarra's Twitter account is the target of what they call “cyber censorship”:

Every night, peña bots attack the PaseDelista1al43 10 pm They want to disappear it from the network JoinAndAct vs cyber censorship (Ibarra, 2016d).

Likewise, several interviewees mentioned the use of bots on Twitter to diminish their demonstration:

In the case of the *Roll Call*, in recent months there is a systematic attack, not as strong as that against sites such as that of accounts like (*Mexican journalist*) Aristegui, but that there is a systematic attack from 10 to 12 at night. That is to say, there is an attack of robots, or robotic accounts to prevent the message, that the wave of messages spreads to everything it can, to contain the surge [...] I assure you that it bothers them a lot and if you ask they, they will say no, it does not matter, but in fact, they pay hundreds of robotized accounts, agencies that handle hundreds of robotized accounts to contain certain topics, And what, you can see this is public and diffused every time it happens, that if President Peña Nieto does some foolishness abroad, they immediately activate accounts to block the mockery of the things he did (Interview 4).

The concern about bots was manifested by several participants. Two more examples are presented next:

Here we call them peñabots, is the analogy with president Peña, and it is indubitable that peñabots have attacked us and threatened us from some time, all of us (Interview 11).

Yes, in fact sometimes Epigmenio has had to apologize or excuse himself from doing the *Roll Call* or do it an hour later due to certain problems that he has had with bots that report him or denounce him and his (*Twitter*) account becomes unstable, it is disabled to tweet or to send direct messages (Interview 14).

In response to what they perceive as organized cyber attacks, participants were motivated to counter these offenses by strengthening their support to the hashtag:

Charge from Peñabots won't impede that we demand TruthandJustice  
PaseDeLista1al43 10pm For the 43+30 thousands missing (León Abel, 2016).

Similarly, other interviewees perceive attempts to silence them and spy on them as individuals. The quote below is from a participant that conducts a roll call on their own who describes having problems with their Internet connection consistently around the time of the roll call:

When I start the roll call, the Internet goes, but it is like, well, before I could believe that the internet in Mexico fails you one day, but now when you notice that exactly at 3 in the afternoon it starts to cut off or... When yes, I am finishing it, those strange things, then how can I take that? as a technical error? In this country? No! (Interview 5).

Another participant describes a fear of being the target of espionage on the part of the authorities:

You always have the fear, I assure you. You always have the fear. I have felt and I have seen in my handling of social media that they are spying on you all the time, I do not know who. When you have calls you feel that they are recording you. And it is normal as I work in an area of government because it is normal for you to be recorded by the state (Interview 7).

The two passages above, as well as the persistent idea that bots attack #PaseDeLista1al43 protests, indicate how protesters position themselves in opposition to holders of power and understand that there are forces dedicated to limit their efforts to protest injustices and abuses in the political and social system.

**Challenging the mainstream consensus.** The “historical truth” statement by the Mexican Attorney General, in which he attempted to shut down the questions about the conclusions of the official investigation of the disappearance, was taken by the protesters as a significant affront against them. The statement is perceived as an attempt by the government to impose a version of the Ayotzinapa case that is not sufficiently backed by evidence and is thus a lie. The following tweet makes reference to this distrust:

“Disseminate. Today 10 pm #PaseDeLista1al43 as the creators of the Historical Lie drown, as #TZembrón (*TPlanter*)” (los obreros críticos, 2016).

Just as the tweet above, in the following passage an interviewee refers to the attempts to frame the official version as the historical truth, which was re-framed by protesters as the historical lie:

The government has been so awkward that it quickly invented a story, a few weeks before GIEI arrived in Mexico, which was the historical truth that quickly became the historical lie. That is, it tried to give a file to the investigators who

came from outside to be satisfied with that and they did not accept it, it tried to invent a planting of remains in the river San Juan with the Argentine forensics and it did not work, and the Argentine forenses do not accepted it. It tried to stop everything with the statement of Peña Nieto saying let's get over it. And it couldn't (Interview 4).

The protesters push back on this official version, as explained below:

They want to uphold their historical truth. And the historical truth it is manifest that it is a truth without support because the experts that were here and intervened in the investigation completely destroyed that historical truth that PGR talked about. There is no possibility that the events developed as the government wants to present them to us (Interview 14).

Thus, participants of the protest demand a more thorough clarification about what happened to the 43 students, as explained by a participant: "I personally, sadly of course, I think we will not find them alive, but, it is the political demand, yes? As long as there is no body, there is no dead" (Interview 1). Moreover, in response to the attempts of shelving the case by the government, the *#PaseDeLista1al43* networked public sought to challenge the official account of the case and bring about their own versions of the situation. Among the "truths" that have emerged regarding what happened with the students, two stand out. First, protesters claim that the disappearance was an attempt to send a message to members of normalistas schools (rural schools for future teachers) because of their left- leaning tendencies.

If it hadn't been for this pressure on social media it is likely that the government of Mexico might have said, let's see, here this happened, they gave their historical

truth, this happened and it was a group of narco dealers that caught the students by mistake, took them to a dumpyard, burned them and that's it. We know it isn't so because there are several testimonies that indicate it isn't so. That here there was a political issue, especially focused toward the rural normal schools that are the center of social protests in the country. They are trying to end the normales (Interview 11).

Similarly, tweets also stressed the idea of the students as targets because of their condition as future teachers:

They wanted to be teachers, crime that the state do not forgive. If we name them they do not disappear! #PaseDeLista1al43 10pm RTplease (López, 2015).

Additionally, another version of the events is a theory usually referred to as “the fifth bus” version, speaking of the buses that the Ayotzinapa students stole to travel to Mexico City prior to their disappearance. This version is mentioned in this tweet:

They were not incinerated in Cocula. Normalistas were in the 5th bus PeñaNieto and OsorioChong Lie! PaseDeLista1al43 10pmRT (Ibarra, 2016a).

This alternative account claims that the fifth bus, which wasn't originally addressed when the authorities briefed on the investigation, was—unbeknownst by the students—filled with drugs. According to this theory, this is the reason why the students ended up being target of violence that day:

One of many theories, well, one that has more coherence, is that unfortunately, they were (*the students*) in the middle of heroin traffic to the United States. That the bus in which they were had heroin, which in dollars value was very high, more than I don't know how many millions of dollars, that heroin shipment was

worth, right? So they couldn't leave them there. And well, it is well known by everyone that the traffic, narcotraffic here in Mexico is colluded to a great extent with authorities, right? Municipals, state, federals and even people from the army. So it is very possible that the kids might have disappeared there, and that the government is actually complicit (Interview 12).

The passages above show that taking part of #PaseDeLista1al43 can serve the purpose of challenging mainstream ideas, and it can provide participants a space to develop and solidify their own accounts about what occurred. The potential for virality that Twitter affords and the lack of filters to post any sort of information in the platform expedites the chances of these versions spreading and gaining traction.

***Articulating a collective identity.*** Messages that aim to strengthen or point to a sense of collective identity among participants in #PaseDeLista1al43 were evident in their interview responses and in the tweets analyzed. On Twitter, the protesters made statements of personal identification in which they referred to each other as “we” and to others as “them,” as exemplified in Figure 20 and in the following tweet:

25 Jorge Antonio Because if we forget they win #ImTired25 #AyotziLives  
#PaseDeLista1al43 (#GastosPendejos, 2015).

This differentiation was established in respect to the group that the protesters considered as their main rival, the elites holding political power in Mexico:

The government might have power, but we have the truth. United for #Ayotzinapa  
@epigmenioibarra #PaseDeLista1al43 22hrs (Carmina, 2015b).

In their interviews, participants referred to themselves as a virtual family, as team, and as a club of friends. The use of some of these terms is exemplified in the quotes below.

It is sensitivity, to demonstrate why we care about the *Roll Call*, support the team that is made with those who are there. We do not know each other but there is a team, invisible, but it is (Interview 3);

It is good, because it is really a convergence of concerns and doubts that is as one, a kind of club of friends emerges because people coincides with a very strong concern (Interview 4).

According to the perspective of these interviewees, what unites them is that they share similar concerns and demands. One participants explains these similarities:

I think solidarity joins us. We are united by the desire to find answers, to achieve change. We are united by pain, we are united by, eh, the fact of having found each other, finding ourselves and knowing that no, no, it (the disappearance) is not something that happened and that is going to stay there and it will keep happening. That's what I think unites us. (Interview 2).

The testimonies above indicate that, despite mainly communicating through Twitter, the people who take part in *#PaseDeListaIal43* do not perceive themselves as being disconnected from each other. Instead, they believe themselves to be a community that is united by similar ideas and grievances about what is going on in Mexico. Participants do not have an exact estimate of how many people belong to their group, but several of them calculated that the number varies from 100 to 200 individuals. Respondents claim that they not only communicate through tweets on Twitter, but also via Twitter's direct message feature, and sometimes even by phone with those that they consider as friends. As such, they talk about issues regarding the protest, such as hashtags to use or sharing

information about a recent event, but also about their personal life as established by two participants in the next quotes:

We have our group of friends that we know each other, we know each others' families, we know our, our lives, and that has been because of the *Roll Call*. We have a community [...] We know each other, we have talked a lot, we have exchanged stuff about our families (Interview 12).

Similar to the interviewee above, in the next passage a participant shares how much other protesters mean to her:

Well I would consider the three of them as very dear friends now and other people, and maybe more than that actually, but not only people in Mexico, but people in Uruguay, who are very supportive of the campaign of justice for Ayotzinapa, but especially three people in particular that I consider, that we've never met, but I hope that we do, that I would be devastated if anything happen to them because we are in contact probably every day now, and not just about Ayotzinapa but about each other's lives. (Interview 8).

Moreover, another marker of the protesters' collective identity is the nickname they have adopted, calling themselves *compa* (an abbreviation of the Spanish word *compadre*). Several of the protesters changed their Twitter names to *compas* and sometimes referred to each other with that term in their tweets or when they talk about each other in conversation:

How many more massacres to the people Compas? #PaseDeLista1Al43 of @epigmenioibarra #ResignNowPeña #RogerWatersAtTheZocalo (CANALLA, 2016b).

In fact, this nickname also originates as an attempt to respond to what was perceived as a form of government oppression during a street protest, according to one of the participants. She describes how the *compas* term was adopted after local police arrested about 20 young people during a protest in Mexico City:

When they burned the image of Peña, you remember that they burned the image, and the door of the National Palace and the police of Mancera (*Mayor of Mexico City*) swept the Zócalo. That day it happens that, well, they seize like 23 or 22 people [...] Among the testimonies given by local police in Mexico City, as well as the federal ones who were there when they testified before the public prosecutor's office, they said that among those kids, 22-24 who were going to be arrested, they were all calling each other compas, as if everyone knew each other, and then, the next day (*we said*) "Oh yeah? they really want us to be compas?", then yes, many there took their title as Compa [...] We as in revenge, let's say, okay!, "we will all be compas", then if you notice that motto, or when, let's say... we are all compas, yes, there are 22 who are in there but we are thousands who are here outside and if you look, every day we fought until they all came out (*from prison*), in the networks (Interview 5).

The interviewee points out that the use of *compas* was conceived as a form of solidarity for those who had the misfortune of being arrested for participating in a march for the Ayotzinapa cause. She also stresses how this solidarity was communicated through social media to make sure that their cases were not forgotten and were eventually released.

***Infiltrating mainstream public discourse.*** Taking into account the protesters' perception of the purpose of #PaseDeLista1al43 protest, the public emerging from this

conversation reflects intentions that are consistent with a counterpublic. Mainly, the tweets and protesters' responses reveal the desire to infiltrate mainstream public discourse. To achieve this goal, members of the protest developed strategies to get attention for their conversation and the issues that are discussed within this networked public. Yet, before developing strategies to disrupt the mainstream public, the *#PaseDeLista1al43* hashtag serves as a training ground for reflecting and articulating reactions to the developments about the case and grievances about other similar problems occurring in the country.

The discussion of the Ayotzinapa issue through the *Roll Call* has sparked a point of departure for utilizing the hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* each night to reflect on several other problems that affect the country in a “virtual assembly.” Although the main intention of the *Roll Call* is to demand justice for the Ayotzinapa students, throughout its years of existence the demonstration has evolved so that it has now become a space for discussion of several other topics in which political power in Mexico is considered to be negligent, corrupt, or abusive:

A little bit of the intention is to make that time from 10 to 11 pm into a space of indignation about things that happen in Mexico and that are not resolved, then there is the space where you talk about Ayotzinapa but also to talk of Tlatlaya (*another famous human rights violation case*)... or if suddenly there is a journalist murdered and, well we go back to mention all the journalists who have been killed or disappeared in recent years, everything that somehow set an undesirable scenario for Mexico (Interview 4).

The case of the missing students is still the main focus of the *Roll Call* and it is deemed as one of the most outrageous events in the recent history of the country. But the use of Twitter to protest about the missing students has allowed this group of people to set a specific time in which they can reflect and discuss about emerging social and political problems in Mexico. In that way, as another interviewee explained, the time from 10:00 to 11:00 pm can serve as a virtual assembly in which other injustices are denounced. In the body of tweets analyzed, the inclusion of hashtags related to other events is indicative of the interest in addressing other topics besides Ayotzinapa. For example, #FreeMirelesNow (about the imprisonment of a community leader), and #Justice5Narvarte (about the assassination of a journalist in Mexico City and four more people). In the protest, some tweets speak to this idea by calling for the unity of all causes via the *#PaseDeLista1al43* conversation:

I summon to #PasedeLista1al43 #TheUnionofAllBattles @epigmenioibarra  
@pacorodriguez (Vergara León, 2016).

In the next quote, an interviewee explains how being part of this networked public allows protesters to process information about new incidents that take place in Mexico and to articulate a reaction to them:

Someone warns you “have you seen the statements of this official on this issue?” it is unacceptable. Well, or someone says, “why don’t we launch a hashtag in the, at that time, with this issue because we cannot allow the government to continue to ignore this,” or “something just happened, I just got information that is happening in that region of the country, they are expelling people, or repressing, or doing something that is unacceptable.” And then we begin to bounce the idea

there, well, let's do this, let's do the other, we launch a message with the same hashtag, all within so many minutes and we give an organization that does not have. It is not very different from what could happen in real life, on the street but, but what is special is that is very dynamic and very fast to solve, and has an incidence that can reach tens of thousands of people in a few minutes (Interview 4).

Having this allotted time and space, and a community of members to talk about new events, helps members of the networked public consolidate their opinion on the issues and strategize what to do about them.

Consistent with features of counterpublics, the analysis pointed out that #PaseDeLista1al43 has an outward looking character, with the purpose of intervening the mainstream public sphere. The tweets often utilize unrelated trending hashtags seeking to insert the Ayotzinapa issue into a conversation with a different topic:

PRI is an expert on crimes against humanity <http://t.co/RDajf52rxX> #IAmTired31  
#SuperBowl #PaseDeLista1al43 #Ayotzinapa #michoacan PRI (Misercatule, 2015).

A similar strategy was tagging a famous personality, from within Mexico or beyond, as a way to inform them about the case:

WE WANT JUSTICE AYOTZINAPA One More Time, we need your help  
@HillaryClinton #PaseDeLista1al43 #InformeGIEI (xmax444, 2016c).

A protest participant explains the logic behind this approach:

I have the certainty that someone anywhere will see it, and then when you see the hashtag #Ayotzinapa, when you see a name, and as you say, when you see a little

face there, well, you're going to get curious, you're going to say, "What happened?" I mean, "what this is?", and when you already have the hashtags of the moment on a global level, which is what I intend to do. If it is now the game I do not know, Germany-France, and I put Ayotzinapa with the #Eurocup2016, suddenly someone who is watching the Eurocup will suddenly see the face of the child, will say "and what it is this?" So, at least you make them curious, I guess. And afterwards, I say I am convinced, I am very happy about what we have achieved so far, that is, I am an ant, in the construction of all this, because I see that we are many (Interview 5).

Using the faces of the students to disrupt a conversation on another topic, the protest sought to awaken interest among some of the receivers of the message and spark an interest in learning more. The participants point out how this possibility is facilitated by the spread of use of mobile devices: "The funny thing about this *Roll Call* is that you get on people's phones, you get on the computer, and you get in their home and you make them sensitive to something that hurts another" (Interview 7).

Several interviewees described their pride in spreading awareness about Ayotzinapa across borders. However, the main goal, according to the protesters' perceptions, is to awaken consciousness of a section of the Mexican population who are not sufficiently informed or have forgotten about the 43 students.

The truth is that it is outrageous that many Mexicans do not even worry or touch the topic anymore, eh, we have to read, we have to be aware, be informed and put yourself in the shoes of those parents, brothers, wives, sons that suffered the loss of a loved one (Interview 14).

The basic purpose of the *Roll Call* is one: do not forget. The government wants you to forget, and if you forget then for impunity to win is very easy. That's one. Number two: uhm, to disseminate relevant information so that those who do not know the situation know it with data, uhm, and make comparisons. If you believe in the report of the PGR that they read it, you ... I have it, I made available to everyone and that the report of the GIEI 1 and the report of the GIEI 2, and that they easily compare some things with others and see who is right. Then, two would be disseminating the information for the, for all Mexicans and the general population that is not aware of the situation (Interview 10).

In light of the perception of a problematic relationship between traditional media and the state, protesters perceived that the available information in the mainstream public sphere is insufficient and even malicious. Therefore, they seek to counter those informational voids and misinformation by inserting themselves in the conversation to increase the public's understanding of the matter.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This project analyzed the networked public that was emergent on Twitter based on analysis of the use of the hashtag *#PaseDelista1al43* to protest the disappearance of 43 students in Mexico in 2014. Broadly, results from this study help elucidate how Twitter can be used to practice contentious politics and thus constitutes another resource in the repertoire for performing contentious politics. Additionally, this study aligns with other research that has identified Twitter as a place for the formation and expression of counterpublics that seek to challenge hegemonic narratives. Moreover, the analyses in this study strengthen our understanding of processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing that occur within a networked public on Twitter. Unlike traditional processes of gatekeeping and framing, networked processes are supported by a symbiotic relationship between elite and non-elite Twitter users. Moreover, frames prevalent in the protest not only concerned facts about the case but also denoted efforts of the protesters to position themselves in the story of the Ayotzinapa case. These findings are discussed in detail below.

### **#PaseDelista1al43 Network Structure**

In networked publics—publics that are restructured by networked technologies (boyd, 2010)—members of the public “can be reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception” (Ito, 2007, p. 3). This study focused on the characteristics of the networked public emergent in the *#PaseDelista1al43* twitter protest. The analysis sought to understand the relationships formed in the network and the patterns of connections among Twitter users participating in the protest. Results from the

social network analysis showed that the #PaseDelistaIal43 networks formed based on retweets and mentions had low reciprocity (no back and forth conversation) and low density (the Twitter users on the network are connected only to few other users in the same network). These characteristics point to a type of network known as a broadcast network, in which individuals “connect to a single or a small number of actors for the majority of the flow of information” (Himelboim, Smith, Raine, Shneiderman, & Espina, 2017, p. 8). Only a few Twitter users in the network, and one in particular (the protest organizer Epigmenio Ibarra), stand out as hubs of information. This structure is similar to the way that information flows in a traditional mass communication model. Yet, the nature of the network becomes more complex when looking at the other main hubs. Unlike typical broadcast networks, which usually have users such media outlets, pundits, and organizations at the center, in the #PaseDelistaIal43 network members of the public acquired prominence in the network. Although power is concentrated in a few hubs, these hubs are not exclusively the usual popular actors (e.g., media outlets, pundits, celebrities) but some of them are regular citizens. I will further elaborate on this topic below when addressing networked gatekeeping and networked framing.

A particularly interesting finding derived from the social network analysis is the lack of reciprocity and low density in the #PaseDelistaIal43 network based on mentions. This result indicates that there are not a lot of conversations occurring in the network. This is because to direct a message to another person (as would be needed for a public conversation to occur on Twitter) requires tagging that user so that the individual knows another user is communicating with them. Papacharissi (2016) notes that one characteristic of affective publics—networked publics mobilized and identified by

expressions of sentiment—is that they support connective action but not necessarily collective action. Taking a look at the characteristics of the structure of the *#PaseDelista1al43* network, the results show that individual viewpoints were connected through the use of a specific hashtag and endorsed with retweets, but there was no apparent negotiation (in the form of conversations) of the frames that predominate in the network. This process is similar to how the hashtag #egypt was used in the context of ground protests in this country in 2011 to position certain narratives about the events (Papacharissi, 2016). Through the connective practice of retweeting, Twitter users posting tweets with the #egypt hashtag framed the Egyptian protests as a revolution (Papacharissi, 2016), in a similar way as Twitter users posting with the *#PaseDelista1al43* hashtag included certain phrases (e.g., “It was the State”) to blame President Peña Nieto’s administration for the students disappearance.

Nonetheless, looking only at the relationships displayed on these networks might miss other forms of communication that the Twitter users participating on this online protest established. Although it might be true that some participants only connect to this network by using the hashtag, the participant interviews included in this study revealed that protesters interacted in other ways beyond the basic functions of Twitter (i.e., posting tweets, mentioning others in tweets, and retweeting). According to the interviews, in private interactions that take place through the direct message function on Twitter (or in some cases by phone), participants organized actions regarding the online protest, discussed issues related to the case, and even developed friendships. In comparisons to other instances in which a use of a hashtag has led to the emergence of a networked public to discuss events occurring on the ground (e.g., the #egypt, case previously

mentioned), the *#PaseDelista1al43* hashtag used for protesting the Ayotzinapa case (starting in January of 2015) has continued to be used for years. This longevity has allowed Twitter users participating in this demonstration the time to get to know each other and interact in different forms (i.e., not only communicating in an public space via tweets, but also having private conversations). Through these interactions participants have identified shared concerns and points of view, and therefore developed a sense of collective identity, rather than just taking part of connective actions on Twitter.

### **Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing**

In the case of *#PaseDelista1al43*, Twitter features such as the use of hashtags, retweets, and mentions, which allow users to record, spread, and amplify information and social interactions, informed the practices and behavior in this networked public (boyd, 2010). Two practices that were of particular interest in this research were the processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing within the networked public. On the *#PaseDelista1al43* network, gatekeeping activities occurred via a group of elite and non-elite Twitter users that worked in collaboration to maintain the hashtag and, as a result, the discussion of the topic of the missing students. These dynamics are indicative of networked gatekeeping, in which the diffusion of information and the determination of information relevance occurred in a fluid relational interplay between incumbent and emergent players (Ernste, 2014). The analysis of the type of actors in the network over the five moments studied showed that a majority of the people involved in using the hashtag were regular Twitter users, thus considered non-elite users. However, there were also elite users involved in the digital protest, such as intellectuals, actors, radio hosts, journalists, and a politician, in addition to the TV producer who led the Twitter protest.

Despite the fact that elite users were outnumbered in terms of the overall amount of Twitter users in the network, the prominence of elite users was evident in regards to the amount of favorites and retweets they received. Particularly, two elite users stood out due to the popularity of several of their tweets (i.e., @epigmenioibarra and @DeniseDresserG). Yet, this type of popularity was also achieved by non-elite users, who became prominent in the network as the digital protest persisted through time, and were able to achieve tweets with a large number of favorites and retweets. As such, on the #PaseDelista1al43 network different type of users coexist. There are few users with high centrality, but who generally have low overall cohesiveness to the rest of the network—elites who rarely retweet others or that have conversations with very few within the network (Ernste, 2014). And then there are many network users, likely members of the general public, who may have lower centrality but high cohesiveness—friendship bonds in some cases—to a small number of acquaintances (Ernste, 2014). The gatekeeping process in this networked context is, thus, more plural because members of the general public are involved. People with non-elite status offline can author content that achieves preeminence and can gain influential status in the network (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012).

Nonetheless, the fact that there are opportunities to become prominent in the network regardless of a user's condition does not completely erase differences in hierarchies between elite and non-elite users. These differences, along with the nature of the relationship between elite and non-elite users in the network, were pointed out by participants interviewed about #PaseDelista1al43 protests. The interviewees underscored the leadership of Epigmenio Ibarra in the creation and maintenance of the daily online

protest. The interviewees discussed that the fact that he was an influential person, offline and online, was helpful to the preservation of the demonstration. Similar to findings from Papacharissi and De Fatima Oliveira (2012) who investigated the protest in Egypt in 2011, the *#PaseDelista1al43* analysis identified that hierarchies still matter in social media protests. For the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest, the daily efforts of its leader, an elite Twitter user, were necessary to sustain the popularity of the *#PaseDelista1al43* hashtag. However, the use of Twitter to protest also allows a “distributed or ‘crowdsourced’ form of leadership based on mechanisms that reward those more involved in mobilization, and the reporting and curating of information, online and offline” (Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2012, p. 279). Therefore, non-elite users became leaders in the network and mobilized their followers to participate in on the ground protest and events about the Ayotzinapa case, report on new developments about the investigation (e.g., the reports from the independent investigators), and curate the *#PaseDeLista1al43* feed with news stories they find about the case.

Non-elite Twitter users mentioned how, from the beginning of *#PaseDelista1al43*, they were motivated by the attention they received from an elite user, Epigmenio Ibarra, to continue with the daily efforts of retweeting the *Roll Call* of the 43 students’ names. The protest organizer also acknowledged the role of elites in his daily tweets inviting other popular Twitter users to take part of the protest. At the same time, some of the interviewees indicated they acquired popularity from their participation in the *Roll Call*, gaining up to thousands of followers as a result. In light of the growth within the *#PaseDelista1al43* network, this crowdsourced elite took on gatekeeping

responsibilities, such as protecting the hashtag in response to bots attacks, attracting more elite users to the protest, and curating information flows in the network.

This coexistence of elite and non-elite users in the *#PaseDelista1al43* network resulted in collaboration for the process of networked framing, in which frames are “revised, rearticulated, and redispersed by both crowd and elite” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012, p. 1). Thus, narratives about the Ayotzinapa case in the *#PaseDelista1al43* Twitter protests were articulated by “the networked interactions between elites and non-elites, supplemented by algorithmic aggregations” afforded by Twitter, which mainly included the use of hashtags (*#PaseDelista1al43* and others) and retweets (Jiang et al., 2016, p. 97). As prior research has found (Jiang et al., 2016; Meraz & Papacharissi, 2012), in the case of this digital protest, framing setting and framing building in this network were not independent processes, because Twitter users were, at different points, both the audience and the authors of messages (Nip & Fu, 2017).

The *#PaseDelista1al43* network includes central Twitter users that position topics in the discussion using the *#PaseDelista1al43* hashtag and underscore certain aspects of those topics, therefore framing the topics in terms of how the problem is defined, what are its causes, morally evaluating the issues, and promoting solutions to them (Entman, 1993). However, it is the crowdsourced actions of non-elite users who retweet and further disseminate elite’s messages, which contributes to making these tweets viral and therefore the most prominent frames in the online protest. In fact, in many instances the elite messages were recirculated without attributing credit to the original source (thus re-appropriated by Twitter users as if they were their own), instead of using the retweet feature, which gives credit to the author. Therefore, the constant repetition of the

messages and not merely the prominence of the Twitter user who authored the post ultimately determined whether the frame acquired stickiness and became popular in the protest.

These networked framing processes, in which the elite users' actions are contingent upon the actions of non-elite users, reveal a "symbiotic interrelationship between the influential and the ordinary in a manner that elevates the actions of non-elites as active participants in the realization of what is newsworthy" (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013, p. 160). Moreover, Papacharissi and De Oliveira (2012) argue that this reproduction and endorsement of frames through repeating and restating of messages engages the reader more affectively than cognitively, because most of the time it does not add more details about the events discussed in the *#PaseDelista1al43* stream, but instead shows the intensity of the endorsement of those frames. As a result, this collaboration of elites and non-elites to consolidate frames in a networked environment allows the users involved on this network to determine not only what should be the news, but also how they are presented, as a mix of facts, opinions, and emotions (Papacharissi, 2014). These characteristics underscore the necessity of considering the conversations that occur in online environments with frameworks that take into account the expression of emotion and affect, and not merely as opportunities for rational deliberation.

The frames that emerged from elite and non-elite users indicate that the protesters rejected the dominant political narrative promoted by the Mexican government regarding the 43 students disappearance. The analysis of tweets from *#PaseDelista1al43* protest revealed the network perceived the government to be an adversary whose account of the events they strongly rejected. *#PaseDelista1al43* protesters asserted particular figures in

the government were responsible for the disappearance of the students and the lack of progress in the investigation. Tweets also emphasized the reports of independent investigations that contravened reports from authorities. Thus, in addition to expressing their distrust in the government, the protesters consistently demanded truth about the case and justice for the missing students. Another important frame that appeared in this protest addressed the humanization of the victims through emphasizing the students' faces and names, features of their personalities, and the suffering of their families. These tweets were imbued with emotions about the missing students and their parents, ranging from affection and love for the victims to anger and outrage about their situation. Furthermore, the authors of the tweets in the *#PaseDelista1al43* Twitter protest revealed a sense of identification with the students and their disappearance. The protesters argued that, because of the general conditions of violence in Mexico, anyone could potentially become victims of a crime like the students were. There were more radical ideas in the *#PaseDelista1al43* protests. For example, some posts argued that a revolution in Mexico was needed. However, overall this type of frame did not gain prominence as it was not widely circulated by the protesters. Similarly, tweets that criticized the protest existed but were marginal, and ultimately failed to become viral.

Thus, the analysis of the *#PaseDelista1al43* frames evince an interest of protesters to talk about the case, updates on the investigation, and details about the victims' lives. However, the protesters also talked about themselves and their emotions related to the disappearance of the 43 students. Instead of only discussing details of the event, the tweets in the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest took content from mainstream media and remixed it with opinions and feelings about the Ayotzinapa case. In that way, Twitter

users utilizing the *#PaseDelista1al43* hashtag positioned themselves in the story of the disappearance, as opposed to only remaining witnesses of it. Therefore, the protest constituted an opportunity for these Twitter users to feel their way into the 43 students' story.

Hashtags can constitute a social awareness stream in which subjectivity and objectivity are combined, representing a user-generated collaborative argument about certain topic (Papacharissi & De Oliveira, 2012). The hashtag *#PaseDelista1al43* consolidated as a social awareness stream that also served as an online home (Papacharissi, 2016) or a long-running epistemic community (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011) for the protest. The stories told about Ayotzinapa on the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest constitute another viewpoint that stands next to others perspectives about the event. For example: "as it is unfolding on the ground, the event as broadcast via television, the event as depicted through the conventions of newspaper storytelling" (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 316). The *#PaseDeLista1al43* account of the Ayotzinapa disappearance serves as an always-on environment in which Twitter users can get updates about the case. It differs from traditional media coverage of events because it portrays the emotion of protesters and seeks as one of its main objectives to humanize the victims of the disappearance. And even though *#PaseDeLista1al43* Twitter protest in some ways aim to complement the protests about the Ayotzinapa case that occur on the ground there are still differences between the two. First, *#PaseDeLista1al43* differs from protest on the ground because of its digital format; and second, because of *#PaseDeLista1al43* protest's possibility to share information about the case in the form of news stories from media outlets, non-governmental organizations reports, or with images and videos created by regular

members of the public. Moreover, as indicated in the interviews, protesters valued the opportunity to portray the Ayotzinapa story in their own terms through Twitter, especially because of their distrust of traditional media. By participating in the online protest, the protesters embraced the opportunity to challenge the narrative that, in their perception, the government was forwarding via a large part of Mexican media organizations. The *#PaseDelista1al43* protesters took content from the journalists and media outlets that they trusted, which tended to be congruent with their left-leaning beliefs, and then curated the news about Ayotzinapa in the *#PaseDelista1al43* stream.

### **Counterpublics**

This study contributes to our understanding of the potential for Twitter to be a place for the expression and consolidation of counterpublics. The emerging public that took part on the *#PaseDelista1al43* Twitter protests has several elements consistent with a counterpublic. According to the perceptions of people interviewed for this project, *#PaseDelista1al43* protesters sought to unmask power relations, mainly, in respect to the complicity of traditional media and the government. Moreover, they also denounced forces within the state that seek to diminish their efforts on Twitter with organized bots attacks and other technical sabotage. These viewpoints are manifest on the messages shared on the protest using the hashtag *#PaseDelista1al43*, in which the government is framed as an adversary of the people. Using Twitter for exposing what is perceived as governmental negligence and repression is consistent with the use of alternative and social media to share grievances against oppressive regimes in other authoritarian contexts such as China (Leung & Lee, 2014) and Egypt (Papacharissi, 2014). Although Mexico is a democracy that features free elections to pick its political leaders, social and

political institutions still maintain authoritarian practices that remain as consequence of over 70 years of non-democratic regime during the past century. In light of these conditions, the possibility for voicing criticism of the government as part of digital protests represents an advantage for a public that considers the spaces available to express dissent and challenge the consensus via traditional media to be limited.

An interesting usage of Twitter for counterpublic purposes in the context of this digital protest is the opportunity for members of this public to articulate their sentiments on a particular issue. Twitter users involved in the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest for years had already formed an opinion about some of the main aspects of the case, such as the idea that the government version of the events was false, as evident by the term “historical lie”, or that the authorities were responsible in the case, as telling of the phrase “it was the state.” Nonetheless, whenever new aspects of the case emerged or other similar events took place, protest participants came together using *#PaseDelista1al43* to reflect on the new development and solidify—via processes of networked framing and gatekeeping—their opinions and feelings on those new aspects under discussion. In that sense, the *#PaseDelista1al43* messages elucidate the dynamics of premediation about the different news coming to light. That is, the *#PaseDelista1al43* messages are revealing of the form that breaking news events take before they turn into stories, often characterized by the presence of intensity and affect that can then transition into substantive reflections (Papacharissi, 2016). Thus, for this counterpublic, the space afforded by the hashtag *#PaseDelista1al43* served as a place for withdrawal and regrouping in order to formulate their perspectives on new issues taking place in Mexico, which they would later manifest outwards to wider publics (Fraser, 1990).

The outward-looking character that is typical of counterpublics to engage and influence broader publics (Leung & Lee, 2014) was also an element identified from the discourse manifested in interviews with *#PaseDelista1al43* participants. The motivations the protesters shared regarding their contribution to the online demonstration pointed to the refusal to let go of the case and the aim to disrupt the mainstream public sphere by forcing the permanency of the topic in the public discussion. Participants in the online protest praised Twitter affordances that allowed them to have outward influence and they developed different strategies to attain this goal. In the *#PaseDelista1al43* tweets, Twitter users invited more people to join their demonstration so that they could therefore reach a wider audience. The *#PaseDelista1al43* protesters also sought attention of elite Twitter users including famous personalities and prominent media outlets. The protesters also tried to infiltrate other conversations by including *#PaseDelista1al43* posts in other popular, unrelated events that occurred. By taking these actions they attempted to generate awareness about the Ayotzinapa disappearance.

Lastly, the analysis of the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest showed that members of this counterpublic articulated a collective identity, which includes a cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community (Poletta & Jasper, 2001). The protesters' discourses in tweets and interviews revealed the presence of three dimensions of collective identity: a shared consciousness of belonging to a community, identity signifiers such as distinctive social and cultural practices, and a common adversary (Soon & Kluver, 2014). Protesters manifested a sense of identification with the rest of the *#PaseDelista1al43* participants, considering their community to be a team, a club of friends, or a virtual family that shares similar concerns and grievances (*consciousness of*

*belonging*). Members of the protest came together because of their daily contribution to the digital protest (*common social practices*) and adopted a shared nickname: “compa” (*identity signifiers*). Furthermore, protesters referred to themselves as “we” or “us,” and positioned themselves in opposition to a “they” or “them”, who is constituted by the political class, and more specifically, the Mexican federal government (*their common adversary*).

### **Contentious Politics in Digital Environments**

This project considers products of digital environments—including the data and the interactions occurring in these data—to be socio-material objects that convey a certain social weight, rather than being just virtual objects (Lupton, 2015). This perspective assumes that “the objects produced on spaces such as Twitter are intimately intertwined with the social facts of the nondigital, physical world” (Graham & Smith, 2016, p. 447). Digital data are socially constructed and have impact beyond the virtual world (Lupton, 2015, p. 25). This study delves into this relationship between virtual and physical worlds by examining the digital footprint of the #PaseDelista1al43 Twitter protest and attending to the discourses of the people that created these footprints. Findings in this research establish that the #PaseDelista1al43 Twitter protest constitutes another layer of the Ayotzinapa case, one in which not only facts about the event, but also people’s opinions and emotions about the issue are articulated. The #PaseDelista1al43 Twitter protest represents a form of practicing contentious politics, where a group of individuals make claims that bear on another entity’s interest (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). In the #PaseDelista1al43 case, the federal government is the target of the protesters’ claims. However, the online protest is not dissociated from protests occurring on the ground.

From its inception, the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest took features of the street demonstrations, such as remembering the 43 missing students by roll calling their names, and adapted it into a digital environment. Therefore, protesting using the *#PaseDelista1al43* hashtag constitutes another form of contentious performance that adds to other resources available to political actors to manifest their claims, the contentious repertoire (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007).

With time, the stream of tweets utilizing the hashtag *#PaseDelista1al43* evolved into an always-on community for expressing grievances about the case. Protest participants perceived it as an extension of the fight to demand for justice that occurred on the ground. This relationship is evident in the content of the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest, which invites people to join the street marches and events to discuss the Ayotzinapa case, and portrays images and information about marches and events that already took place. Many of the photos included in the *#PaseDelista1al43* tweets present images of street protests, seemingly to add an illustration to the text in the tweet, further stressing the link between virtual and physical world. In this way, the space afforded in the digital protest makes it possible to frame ground protests in their own terms, countering common frames used in news media that focus on the spectacle and delegitimization of protests instead of debating the issues that originate them (Mcleod, 2007).

This study does not seek to establish causality and cannot make claims about the consequences of using Twitter for practicing contentious politics, but the analysis of tweets and the conversations with participants of the protest revealed that interactions that take place on Twitter are not cordoned in a digital world, but maintain a connection with the world outside the social media platform (Graham & Smith, 2016). At the same time

and for that reason, it must be noted that Twitter should not be over idealized for its potential to highlight diverse voices. The economic values that dominate outside of the digital world, which prioritizes advertisers and elites, are also predominant on Twitter (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2014). Inequalities that take place outside of Twitter can be reproduced on the social media platform (Graham & Smith, 2016). Jackson and Foucault Welles (2014) note that narratives that challenge hegemonic discourses can be easily missed on Twitter, without substantive engagement, particularly because of the speed that characterizes this medium. Yet, the longevity and persistency of the *#PaseDelista1al43* Twitter protest make this particular narrative harder to miss. Moreover, the symbolic impact of the narrative portrayed in this protest should not be minimized because “the process of reimagining society cannot occur without first negotiating and redefining what societal institutions represent and what their role should be” (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 320). In order to reimagine society and redefine institutions, voices that are traditionally marginalized should take part of the process of redefinition. A Twitter networked public like the one studied here may offer an opportunity to hear those voices and do so in their own terms, including the expression of emotions and blending subjectivity with objectivity by addressing their place within the story of the Ayotzinapa case.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

This research has some limitations. Research Question 3 investigates the frames that emerged from the collaboration of elite and non-elite Twitter users posting tweets on the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest, in a process known as networked framing. This concept deviates from traditional forms of framing because the latter does not rely on the interaction between elites and the public but remain in the hands of media institutions.

Similarly, Research Question 5 investigates the elements of the networked public that indicate that the *#PaseDelista1al43* protest constitutes a counterpublic that pushes against discourses on the mainstream public sphere. However, this study did not investigate frames or discourses in the mainstream sphere that could serve as a point of comparison for the findings regarding the networked public. Yet, this limitation does not diminish the findings that address these inquiries. Results from the thematic analyses conducted to respond to Research Questions 3 and 5 do not draw conclusions from comparing the frames and discourses to those on the mainstream sphere. Instead, the analysis relies on protest participants' perceptions, taken from the tweets and interviews, to identify: 1) the main topics in the protest and how they were framed, 2) and how the participants considered their ideas as different from the dominant narratives from the political elite and media organizations. Future studies should examine the frames and discourses portrayed in traditional media about the Ayotzinapa case, or in other forums to share opinions about the issue as media outlet comment sections. Another direction for future studies, is considering the possibility that networked publics can be a breeding ground for distributing fake news. Although anecdotal observation did not reveal the presence of fake news on the *#PaseDelista1al43* network, the distrust in traditional media and the overall declared purpose of providing a narrative that challenges hegemonic narratives about the case might make these publics susceptible to disseminating false information.

An additional limitation is the amount of interviews conducted which can be considered small ( $N = 14$ ) in comparison with other studies published in the communication field that average around 30 participants (Jensen, Christy, Gettings, & Lareau, 2013). Nonetheless, the overall *#PaseDelista1al43* protesters population is

potentially small, based on two considerations: 1) the amount of retweets that the students' *Roll Call* get daily – the one conducted by Epigmenio Ibarra – is about 80-100, 2) the estimation from some participants about how many of them contribute to the protest (from 100 to 200). Additionally, the subjects interviewed represented different types of participants of the protest, for example, protesters that do a roll call of their own besides the one conducted by Ibarra, people that just retweet the original *Roll Call*, participants that create their own images to curate the content in the protest, participants that are not Mexicans citizens, and Mexicans in another country. This diversity in the type of participation and the demographic characteristics of the protesters indicate that there is variation in the range of participants interviewed and, despite such diversity, saturation was reached for the findings reported on this study. Lastly, an additional limitation of these interviews is that they were conducted in two different periods of time, which could impact participants' responses. However, all the subjects interviewed in the first period are still taking part of the protest and the responses from those interviewed in the second period echoed what participants said in the first round of interviews.

Another limitation of the study concerns the way in which retweets were reported on the database of tweets acquired from Follow The Hashtag. The different ways in which Twitter allows a user to retransmit a tweet to their followers complicates determining whether a tweet is a retweet or not. A Twitter user can tweet from the Twitter website, from the Twitter app, or use a Twitter client app (a third-party app that allow a user to manage their tweets and Twitter account in a different way than the original platform). Using these different alternatives to tweet impacts the format in which a retweet is shown in a user's timeline. Besides, Twitter users can "compose" a retweet

on their own by copying a tweet and posting it without using the retweet feature. Therefore, the retweets that have “RT” or “Retweeted” were captured by Follow The Hashtag and therefore used for the analysis of the network, but others that used quotation marks to cite a tweet but that had no indication of being retweets were not marked as retweets in the database. This omission helps explain why the network of retweets is smaller than the network of mentions. However, the retweet network shown in Figures 3 and 4 is still telling of the patterns of retweet interactions that took place in the network whereas Table 2 provides an overview of the most popular users in terms of the amount of retweets they had in individual tweets. Moreover, there is another limitation of the study related to the data available for analysis. Networks on Twitter are commonly analyzed considering the links of Twitter users following each other. It is likely that, given the relationships that protesters interviewed claim to have developed with other protesters, a network analysis of this followers pattern would prove to be denser (users would be more connected to each other) than what the mentions and retweet networks were. A future study could look into this relationships to better understand the *#PaseDelistaIal43* network.

## **Conclusion**

This research approaches the study of a networked public from a mixed method perspective contributing to have a better understanding of its origin, the relationships that happen within it, and how they can be maintained over time. The longevity of the protest and level of commitment of its participants facilitated reaching out to them to delve into their motivations for contributing on this online demonstration. Although Twitter is praised for its immediacy for delivering information and expressing opinions, the

findings of this study point to the possibility of Twitter to house a long-lasting public that seeks to challenge dominant political narratives. A public that came together on Twitter joined by the hashtag *#PaseDelista1al43* can go beyond short connective actions on Twitter and develop a collective identity that does not remain cordoned on a virtual world, but that coexists (and can feed and be fed by) with other accounts of the Ayotzinapa case and the overall cause for justice for the 43 missing students.

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## Tables

Table 1.

*Summary of Research Questions and Methods*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>RQ1:</i> What are the structural characteristics of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter networked public?	Social Network Analysis (SNA)	Node XL was used to analyze the metadata of tweets with the hashtag #PaseDeLista1al43 in order to map the network structure (in terms of RTs and mentions).
<i>RQ2:</i> How do the process of networked gatekeeping unfold in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter networked public?	Descriptive Analysis  Interviews	Twitter profiles of participants were coded to determine their identity. Most popular Twitter users were determined according to the amount of retweets and favorites. Protest participants were asked about their perspectives on the topic.
<i>RQ3:</i> What are the networked frames used in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter network?	Inductive Thematic Analysis Descriptive Analysis	Tweets' content was coded to identify main themes. Frequencies of hashtags were analyzed to establish main themes.
<i>RQ4:</i> What role do protest participants perceive that traditional media sources play in the Ayotzinapa case and in the dynamics of the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter networked public?	Interviews	Protest participants were asked about their perspectives on the topic.
<i>RQ5:</i> How does the roll call contribute to the formation of a counterpublic?	Interviews  Deductive Thematic Analysis	Protest participants were asked about their perspectives on the topic. Tweets were coded to identify counterpublic elements.

Table 2.

*Interview Guide*

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- Describe the *Roll Call* #PaseDeLista1al43 / What is its purpose?
  - Who are the targets of the *Roll Call* messages?
  - Can you talk about the nature of your participation in the *Roll Call*?
  - Why do you participate in the *Roll Call*?
  - Describe your relationship with other participants of the *Roll Call*.
  - What consequences do you perceive the *Roll Call* have? What consequences would you like it to have?
  - In what other ways do you engage in social or political causes?
  - What advantages and/or disadvantages do you perceive in using social media for this purpose?
  - How do the *Roll Call* ideas differ from those found in other media channels?
-

Table 3.

*Demographics of Interview Respondents*

Interview	Sex	Age	Education Level	Occupation	State of Residence	Monthly Income	Political Party	Political Ideology
1	F	63	Doctorate	Professor	Mexico City	\$1,097	Morena	Left
2	F	56	Associate Degree	Project Planning	Dominican Republic	\$1,803	None	None
3	F	41	High School	Admin. Assistant	Washington St., US	\$2,200	None	Left
4	M	60	College	Web Consultant	Morelos	\$820	Morena	Left
5	F	46	College	Communication Consultant	Mexico City	\$2,200	None	Left
6	M	50	College	Maintenance Supervisor	Mexico City	N/R	None	None
7	M	46	Master	Parliamentary Advisor	Jalisco	\$1,640	None	Left
8	F	54	College	Artist	Scotland	\$8,420	None	Left
9	F	42	College	Teacher	Mexico City	\$245	None	None
10	M	54	College	Consultant	Mexico City	\$2,500	None	Center
11	M	57	Some College	Retiree	Puebla	N/R	Morena	Left
12	M	51	College	Engineer	San Luis Potosí	\$1,900	Morena	Left
13	M	29	College	Logistics Manager	Mexico City	\$875	Morena	Left
14	M	45	College	Teacher	Veracruz	\$1,100	Morena	Center-Left

Note: F= Female M = Male; N/R = No Response; Income is reported in US dollars.

Table 4.

*Type of Actors on the #PaseDeLista1al43 protests*

Type of Actor	Moments					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Non-elite User	193	180	122	83	56	734
Elite User	21	14	15	9	11	70
Activist/NGO	12	7	31	2	8	60
Blogger/Blog	5	6	5	4	5	25
Bot	8	1	1	0	9	19
Total	239	208	174	98	189	908

Table 5.

*Actors with Highest Number of Retweets and Favorites in a Tweet*

<i>Moment</i>	<i>Retweets Actor (Type of Actor)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Favorites Actor (Type of Actor)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
M1	epigmenioibarra*	338	epigmenioibarra*	128
	luisrg01	84	AcaTovarish	24
	koskita	62	marisolgase*	24
	jc_esquivel	61	Buendia_Tunel	21
	fotoartesanos	59	luisrg01	21
	CarminaDiazB	52	koskita	21
	GastosPendejos**	50	CarminaDiazB	20
	DuelesMexico	49	TapiaFernanda*	19
	1404mati	47	1404mati	17
	AcaTovarish	47	FLORISABELACRUZ	15
	Buendia_Tunel	47	ROMM750515	14
	MT_enMEXICO**	43	fotoartesanos	14
	Roramosfer	43	GastosPendejos**	14
	haurrubi*	42	jc_esquivel	13
	NoelCastaneda	42	jery_fletcher*	13
M2	epigmenioibarra*	361	epigmenioibarra*	132
	TapiaFernanda *	96	TapiaFernanda *	25
	umbaldi	72	umbaldi	24
	koskita	72	AnonymousMex_**	24
	AnonymousMex_**	64	koskita	21
	CarminaDiazB	60	DuelesMexico	17
	ernesto2000e	55	alejandradiaza8	16
	DuelesMexico	49	Wolverine_IPN	15
	alejandradiaza8	44	Abigail_HdzM	14
	Wolverine_IPN	41	CarminaDiazB	13
	HomeGa2	41	ernesto2000e	12
	VicrjtPancho	40	VicrjtPancho	12
	Abigail_HdzM	40	xuyuanze	12
	BGomezdelCampo	39	marisolgase*	12
	trotami	35	macopa	11
M3	DeniseDresserG*	693	DeniseDresserG*	452
	epigmenioibarra*	429	epigmenioibarra*	141
	DuelesMexico	99	DuelesMexico	43
	lizmorag	95	JohnMAckerman*	38
	julioastillero*	80	lizmorag	35
	hekglez	75	hekglez	30
	BrendaH2O66***	75	BrendaH2O66***	30
	alexabre022	71	julioastillero*	27
	Buendia_Tunel	69	ostkneejerk	25
	JohnMAckerman*	67	AnonymousMex_**	21
	postkneejerk	66	saos50	20
	yomartz	61	Poesia_y_versos	20
	AnonymousMex**	59	yomartz	19

Table 5.

*Actors with Highest Number of Retweets and Favorites in a Tweet (continued)*

<i>Moment</i>	<i>Retweets Actor (Type of Actor)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Favorites Actor (Type of Actor)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
M3	Poesia_y_versos avril_presz	55 49	alexabre022 nonny_lopez	19 17
M4	DeniseDresserG* epigmenioibarra* julioastillero* AlbaniaOC alynmon alexabre022 hekglez canallasforever DuelesMexico Mboe55 Loe_25sept saos50 vozenardecida rcanudasg JOSEFRANCISCO01	629 304 152 145 145 130 106 105 102 92 91 77 59 58 57	DeniseDresserG* epigmenioibarra* hekglez julioastillero* alynmon alexabre022 AlbaniaOC Loe_25sept DuelesMexico Mboe55 canallasforever xmax444 JOSEFRANCISCO01 saos50 rcanudasg	666 173 67 59 56 56 52 41 36 31 29 26 25 24 23
M5	DeniseDresser* epigmenioibarra* alexabre022 AlbaniaOC hekglez canallasforever alynmon Loe_25sept JOSEFRANCISCO01 julioastillero* Mboe55 avril_presz ClaudiaGlezL AnonymousMex_- saos50	901 528 177 174 145 135 119 114 107 101 92 87 83 74 72	DeniseDresserG* epigmenioibarra* alexabre022 AlbaniaOC JOSEFRANCISCO01 alynmon hekglez canallasforever Loe_25sept julioastillero* Mboe55 saos50 JOSEFRANCISCO01 ClaudiaGlezL avril_presz	934 339 99 83 66 65 63 60 60 58 47 42 42 42 39
ALL	DeniseDresserG* epigmenioibarra* AlbaniaOC alexabre022 julioastillero* hekglez alynmon	901 528 177 174 152 145 145	DeniseDresserG* epigmenioibarra* alexabre022 AlbaniaOC JOSEFRANCISCO01 alynmon hekglez	934 527 360 234 104 102 101

Table 5.

*Actors with Highest Number of Retweets and Favorites in a Tweet (continued)*

Moment	Retweets		Favorites	
	Actor (Type of Actor)	Frequency	Actor (Type of Actor)	Frequency
ALL	canallasforever	135	canallasforever	92
	Loe_25sept	114	Loe_25sept	90
	JOSEFRANCISCO01	107	julioastillero*	86
	DuelesMexico	102	saos50	64
	TapiaFernanda*	96	ClaudiaGlezL	63
	lizmorag	95	Mboe55	62
	Mboe55	92	avril_presz	62
	avril_presz	87	san_yorch	62

Note. \* Elite User; \*\* Blog or Blogger; \*\*\* Activist or NGO; No \* Citizens; ALL = Top users over the 5 moments analyzed.

Table 6.

*Hashtags Used in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Protests*

Moments	Hashtag (Translation)	Frequency
Moment 1	#YameCanse25 (Imtired25)	356
	#ayotzivive (ayotzilives)	247
	#YameCanse26 (Imtired26)	156
	#AyotzinapaSomosTodos (AyotzinapalsEveryone)	139
	#Ayotzinapa	134
	#EsElEstado (ItistheState)	93
	#YameCanse24 (Imtired24)	50
	#Mex	46
	#FueElEjercito (ItwasTheArmy)	41
	#MEXICO	40
	#TodosSomosAyotzinapa (WeAreAllAyotzinapa)	35
	#YaMeCanse (Imtired)	34
	#FueraPeñaNieto (PeñaNietoOut)	32
	#FueElEstado (ItWasTheState)	21
	#Mexiko	16
Moment 2	#YameCanse29 (ImTired29)	111
	#Ayotzinapa	81
	#AyotzinapaSomosTodos (AyotzinapalsAllofUs)	71
	#FueElEstado (ItWasTheState)	67
	#EPNnoteHagasMenso (EPNdontPlayDumb)	58
	#NoOlvidoNoPerdonoNoSupero (DontForgetDontForgiveDontLetGo)	49
	#NoAlCarpetazo (NoShelving)	48
	#NoEstánSolos (YouAreNotAlone)	44
	#AyotzinapaNoSeOlvida (AyotzinapaIsntForgotten)	25
	#YameCanse26 (ImTired26)	19
Moment 3	#Ayotzinapa	72
	#DiadelIndignacion (DayofIndignation)	64
	#FueraPeñaNieto (PeñaNietoOut)	44
	#AyotzinapaSomosTodos (AyotzinapalsAllofUs)	23
	#NosFaltan43 (Wearemissing43)	21
	#XlaUnidadDeTodaslasLuchas (FortheUnityofEveryFight)	21
	#Ayotzinapa1año (Ayotzinapa1year)	19
	#PeñaKiller	15
	#FueraBueno (BuenoOut)	15
	#ElCorruptoEnlaONU (TheCorruptattheUN)	14
	#1AñodeIndignacion (1yearofIndignation)	14
	#SuperBloodMoon	14
	#México	13
	#fueraPeña (PeñaOut)	13
	#VivoLoQueremos (WeWantHimAlive)	11
	#PeñaNietoTieneQueIrse (PeñaNietoHasToGo)	11
	#DiadelIndignación (DayofIndignation)	11

Table 6.

*Hashtags Used in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Protests (continued)*

Moments	Hashtag (Translation)	Frequency
Moment 4	#Ayotzinapa19meses (Ayotzinapa19months) #FueElEstado (ItWasTheState) #Ayotzinapa #TomasZeron #Presente (Present) #InformeGIEI (GIEIreport) #Mexico	39 27 19 17 15 14 13
Moment 5	#Ayotzinapa2años (Ayotzinapa2years) #Ayotzinapa #Ayotzinapa2años (Ayotzinapa2years) #Ayotzinapa #26deSeptiembre (September26th) #RogerWatersenelZocalo (RogerWatersatelZocalo) #Ayotzinapa2Anos (Ayotzinapa2years) #10pm #FueElEstado (ItwastheState) #RenunciaYa (ResignNow) #NiPerdonNiOlvido (NoforgivenessNoOblivion) #Mexico #26Sept	83 76 43 37 20 16 13 13 12 11 11 11 11

Note. Text in parentheses provides the English translation of the hashtag.

## Figures

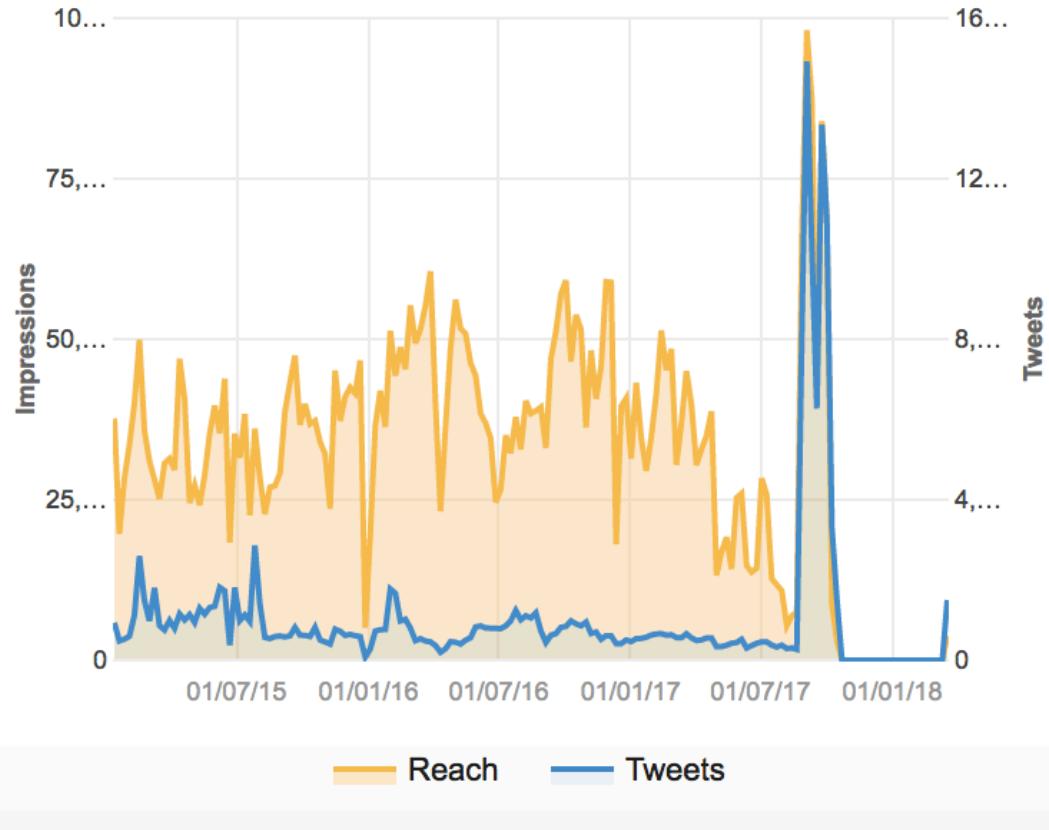
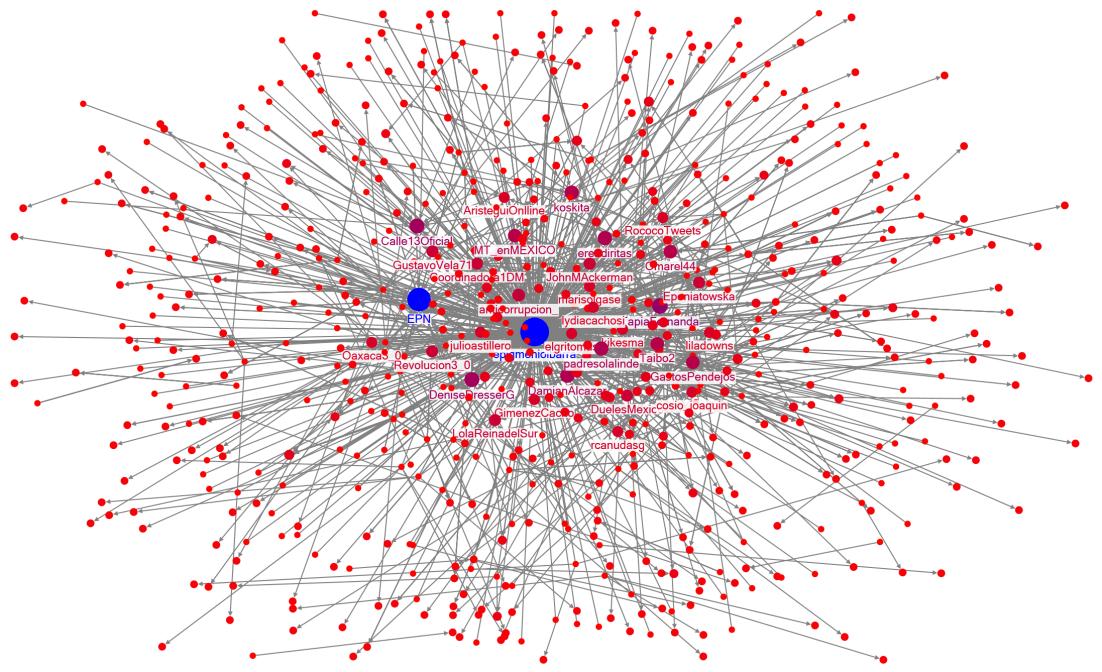
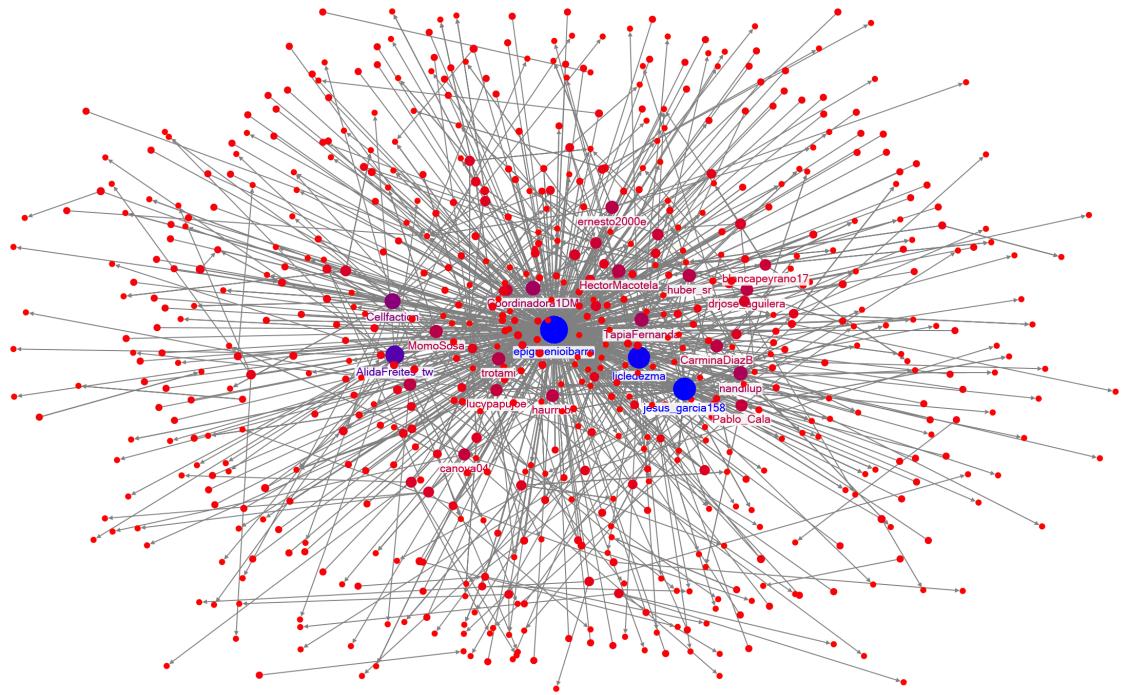


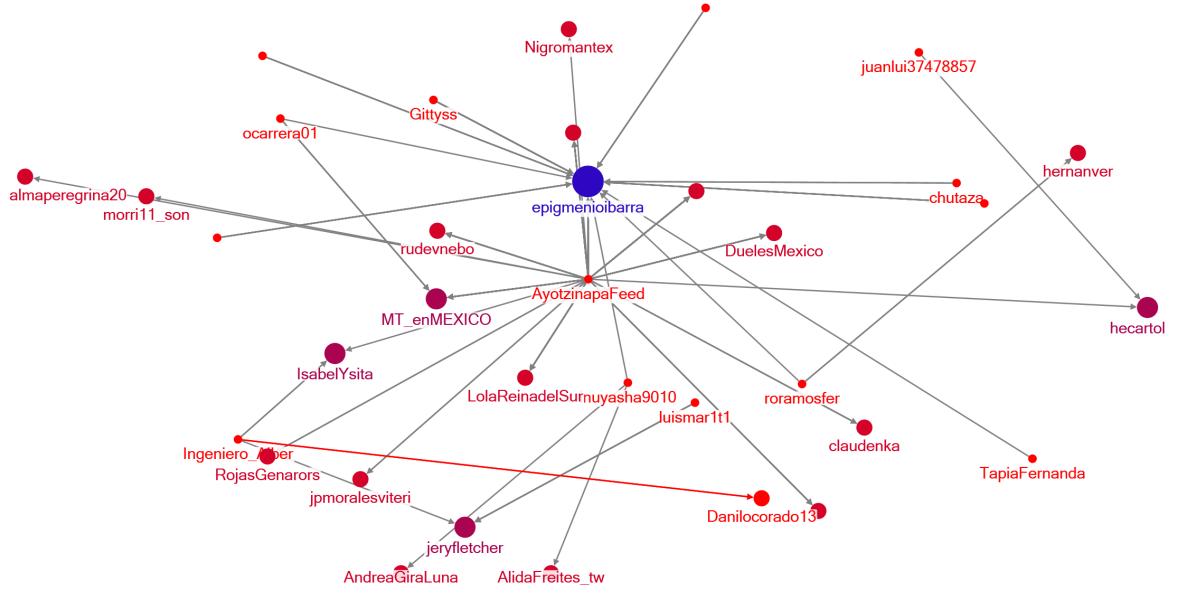
Figure 1. Evolution of Tweets Using the Hashtag *#PaseDeLista1al43* from 01/15/2017-10/06/2017. Reach indicates to how many unique Twitter accounts saw the tweet. Tweets refers to the number of tweets that used the hashtag. Graph created by Follow The Hashtag (2017).



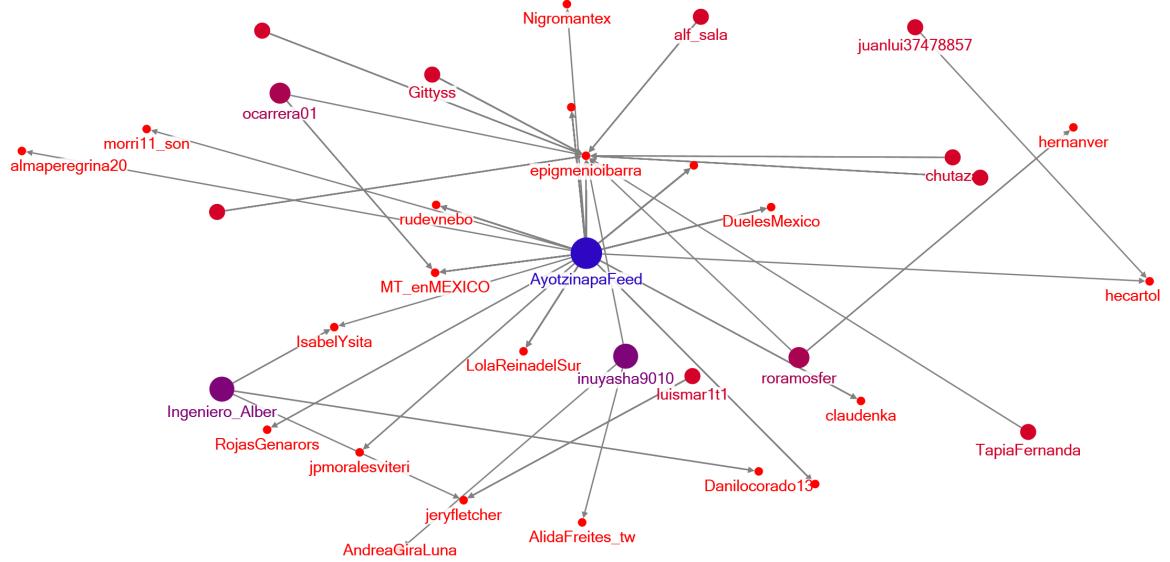
*Figure 2.* Graphical Representation of the Network of Mentions in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their in-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower in-degree are red and those with higher in-degree are blue. The image was created with NodeXL using the Fruchterman-Reingold directed graph layout algorithm.



*Figure 3.* Graphical Representation of the Network of Mentions in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their out-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower out-degree are red and those with higher out-degree are blue. The image was created with NodeXL using the Fruchterman-Reingold directed graph layout algorithm.



*Figure 4.* Graphical Representation of the Network of Retweets in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their in-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower in-degree are red and those with higher in-degree are blue. The image was created with NodeXL using the Fruchterman-Reingold directed graph layout algorithm.



*Figure 5.* Graphical Representation of the Network of Retweets in the #PaseDeLista1al43 Twitter Protests. Nodes are sized according to their out-degree centrality and are colored in a scale from red to blue such that those nodes with lower out-degree are red and those with higher out-degree are blue. The image was created with NodeXL using the Fruchterman-Reingold directed graph layout algorithm.



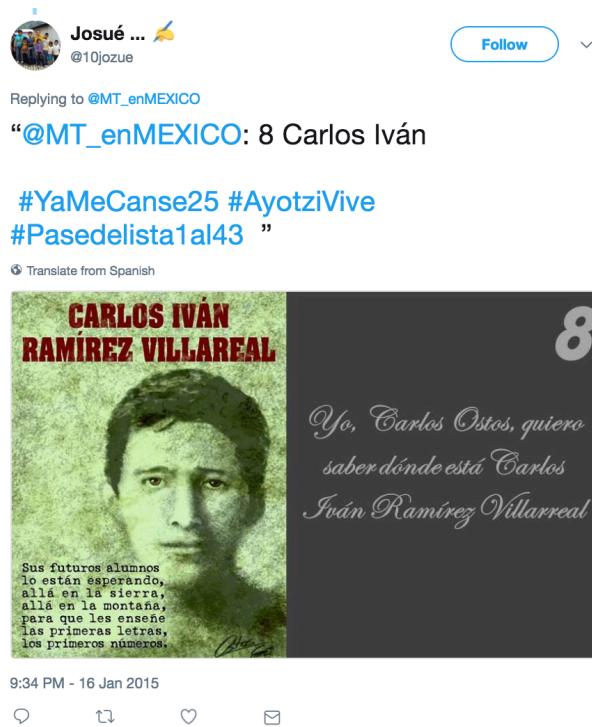
Figure 6. Translated Tweet Text. “-36 Magdaleno #ImTired25 #ayotziLIVES #PasedeLista1al43”

Translated Illustration: “I, Naandeyé, want to know where is Magdaleno Rubén Lauro Villegas” (MT\_enMEXICO, 2015).



*Figure 7.* Translated Tweet Text. “#ImTired29 #PaseDeLista1al43 42. Miguel Mendoza #DontForgetDontForgiveDontLetGo #EPNDontPlayDumb @epigmenioibarra”

Translated Illustration: “‘Miguel Ángel Mendoza Zacarias, I still want you alive’ / ‘... he had not entered to study before because he didn’t have money and he dedicated instead to help his parents, he is the youngest, he helped them, and now he is gone.’ / ‘... he supported, helped, give you advice, he never expected that you would give him something, to the contrary.’ / ‘his mom has told me that she wants to go to Mexico to ask for help, because it is her little son, and he is missing.’” (Hdz, 2015).



*Figure 8.* Translated Tweet Text. “@MT\_enMexico: 8 Carlos Iván # ImTired25 #ayotziLIVES #PasedeListalal43”

Translated Illustration. “I, Carlos Ostos, want to know where Carlos Iván Ramírez Villarreal is / Their future students are waiting for them, up there in the hill, up there in the mountain, so they teach them their first letters, their first numbers” (Josué, 2015).



*Figure 9.* Translated TweetText. “What did Tomás Zerón do at Cocula? #PasedeLista1al43”

Translated URL Preview. “What did Tomás Zerón do at Cocula? The Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts accuses Tomás Zerón of distorting the events that occurred at Cocula, October 28<sup>th</sup> 2014, that there isn’t left...” (#TodosConAMLOVSKY, 2016).

xmax444  
@xmax444

Follow

#GIEI y #Ayotzinapa son noticia principal,  
esto no lo detiene ni Peña.  
Por ellos decimos Presente!  
**#PaseDeLista1al43**

The New York Times @nytimes  
Mexico has thwarted efforts to solve disappearance of 43 students, investigators say nyti.ms/1pt4X4V

5:58 PM - 23 Apr 2016

27 Retweets 7 Likes

1 27 7

AngelicaTreviñoAlvar @AlvarTrevino · 23 Apr 2016  
Replying to @xmax444  
@xmax444 @alfredo228 @nytimes @AlvarTrevino

1 2

Figure 10. Translated Tweet Text: “#GIEI and #Ayotzinapa are the main news, not even Peña can stop this. For them we say PRESENT! #PaseDeLista1al43” (xmax444, 2016a).



*Figure 11.* Translated Tweet Text. “From #Spain @madrid43ayotzi Calling EVERYONE who wants to do #PaseDeLista1al43 We want JUSTICE @WeWantThemAlive #September26”

Translated Illustration. “Ayotzinapa. 2 years of the disappearance of 43 students at Guerrero, Mexico. #UNTILWEFINDTHEM Manifestation: Plaza del Callao – Ópera (Madrid) Monday, September 26, 2016 20hrs.” (Furkán, 2016).

 René Sánchez Puls  
 @rspuls7 Follow

#México #Ayotzinapa #PaseDeLista1al43  
 sugiero vean vídeo de #MadresYPadres  
 @GIEIAYOTZINAPA y #PGR  
[youtube.com/watch?v=LGFPyF...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGFPyF...) vía  
 @youtube



Familares de los 43 piden a la CIDH que el GIEI se quede  
 Madres y padres de los 43 normalistas de Ayotzinapa desaparecidos el 26 de sept...  
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

10:43 PM - 23 Apr 2016

1 Retweet 

*Figure 12.* Translated Tweet Text: “#Mexico #Ayotzinapa #PaseDeLista1al43 I suggest you see the video of #MothersAndFathers @GIEIAYOTZINAPA and #PGR <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGFPyF...> vía @youtube”

Translated URL Preview. “Family of the 43 ask CIDH for GIEI to stay. Mothers and fathers of the 43 normalistas of Ayotzinapa disappeared on September 26” (Sánchez Puls, 2016).



*Figure 13.* Translated Tweet Text. “We don’t forget the #PaseDelista1al43 10pm WE DON’T GIVE UP WITH @epigmenioibarra each night we demand you resignation @EPN” (Mora, 2016).



*Figure 14.* Translated Tweet Text. “To NY Peña took off to not hear the scream that inundated the streets. May that scream reach him in the network. PasedeLista1al43 10pm RT” (Ibarra, 2015d).



Noticias Ayotzinapa  
@AyotzinapaFeed

RT Emilie\_mua38637: RT sinaloa: RT LorenaArc10:  
[#QuienTemeTeCensura](#) [#PaseDeLista1al43](#)  
[#FueronLosFederales](#) [#Ayotzin...](#)



5:36 AM · Oct 2, 2015

1 Retweet

*Figure 15.* Translated Tweet Text. “@AyotzinapaFeed: RT Emile\_mua38637: RT sinaloa: RT LorenArc10: #WhoFearsYouCensorsYou #PaseDeLista1al43 #ItWasTheFeds #Ayotzin...” (Noticias Ayotzinapa, 2015b).



Angel García  
@BhantersGarcia

#PaseDeLista1Al43 porque no aceptamos la "verdad histórica"

@epigmenioibarra @GustavoVela71  
@observacatholic



10:07 PM · Apr 25, 2016

*Figure 16.* Translated Tweet Text: “#PaseDeLista1al43 because we don’t accept the ‘historical truth’ @epigmenioibarra @GustavoVela71 @observacatholic”

Translated Illustration. “#Ayotzinapa is not an isolated case It was not the narco It was the State” (García, 2016).



Figure 17. Translated Tweet Text. @AnaElen73908848: “#PaseDeLista1al43 #ImTired29 #AyotzinapaIsAllofUS #ItWastheState @EPN #Ayotzinapa #YouAreNotAlone #NoShelving”

Translated Illustration: “This country was made by rebels, not submissives. The weak and lazy people, without will and consciousness, are the one that take pleasure in being ill-governed” (TierrayLibertad, 2015).



Figure 18. Translated Tweet Text. “I don’t get tired You don’t get tired They don’t get tired We unite strength and sentiment for Ayotzinapa. #PaseDeLista1al43”

Translated Illustration. “The government calls them criminals. My sons were not criminals, they just wanted to study’ Joacina Oliveria Parral Rosa, mother of Jorge Luis González Parral and Dorian González Parral.” (xmax444, 2015a).



*Figure 19.* Translated Tweet Text. “Justice and truth for Ayotzinapa. Until we found them! #PaseDeLista1al43 with @epigmenioibarra @hekglez @roldanj1264 @joffre\_eder @rcanudasg”

Translated Illustration. “ ‘Don’t think that we are going to cry to our houses. We’ll look for our children under rocks and everywhere in the world if necessary’ Metodia Carrillo, Mother of normalista Luis Ángel Abarca Carrillo.” (Mireya P-R, 2016).



Figure 20. Translated Tweet Text: “@epigmenioibarra Let’s not allow that silence drowns our demand for justiceNo forgiveness, no oblivion!#PaseDeLista1al43

Translated Illustration. “WE WILL WIN THE MOST HUMBLE WE WILL WIN. EVEN IF YOU DON’T BELIEVE IT, WE WILL WIN. P. NERUDA” (Alejandra, 2015).

## VITA

Rocío Galarza Molina received her PhD in Communication at the University of Missouri in May 2018 (B.A. Political Science, Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2005; M.A. Political Analysis and Media, Tecnológico de Monterrey, 2012). Rocío's scholarship examines the role of media in a new democracy focusing on the impact of journalism, social media, and political communication processes in the Mexican democratic transition. Her dissertation delves into the use of social media for the performance of contentious politics, analyzing the networked publics emergent on Twitter that consolidated as a result of the expressions of grievances regarding the disappearance of 43 students in Mexico in 2014. Rocío's scholarly work has been published in *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Sociales*, *Revista Mexicana de Derecho Electoral*, *Communication Studies* and *American Behavioral Scientist*. Rocío has presented her research in national and international conferences including the International Communication Association, the National Communication Association, the World Association for Public Opinion Research, and the Central States Communication Association. At the University of Missouri, she taught the course Media Communication in Society from 2017-2018. Rocío is a research fellow for the Political Communication Institute at the University of Missouri where she has worked in academic investigations related to the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. Similarly, during her master studies at Tecnológico de Monterrey she contributed with a research team to investigate the Mexican 2012 presidential elections in a project sponsored by the United Nations Development Program. In 2013 she received the Fulbright scholarship that sponsored her doctoral studies.