ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	BEARING WITNESS WHILE BLACK: AFRICAN AMERICANS, SMARTPHONES, AND THE NEW PROTEST #JOURNALISM
	Allissa V. Richardson Doctor of Philosophy, 2017
Dissertation directed by:	Professor Linda Steiner Philip Merrill College of Journalism

Modern black citizen journalists have embraced the mobile phone as their storytelling tool of choice to produce raw reportage that challenges long-standing narratives of race, power and privilege in America. This dissertation investigates specifically how leading anti-police brutality activists—especially those affiliated with the Black Lives Matter Movement—leverage the affordances of mobile and social media to report original news within the contemporary social justice "beat." Through semi-structured interviews and a descriptive analysis of the activists' Twitter timelines, I explore the journalistic roles that these activists perform, the types of stories that they produce most often, and the relationships that they have formed with their audiences. I argue that the reportage from these black witnesses forms the vanguard of modern protest journalism, which functions from a positionality of *sous*veillance to watch powerful authorities from below. This evolving genre of protest journalism fills the editorial voids that the dying Black press has left behind, and invents ripe areas of inquiry for journalism studies.

BEARING WITNESS WHILE BLACK:
AFRICAN AMERICANS, SMARTPHONES, AND
THE NEW PROTEST #JOURNALISM

by

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"Freedom, by definition, is people realizing that they are their own leaders."

—Diane Nash

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES & CHARTS

Bearing Witness While Black:

African Americans, Smartphones, and the New Protest #Journalism

As Leo Frank's lifeless corpse hung from an oak tree in Marietta, Georgia on August 17, 1915, the satisfied mob snapped photographs. Justice, in their minds, had finally been served. The 29-year-old, Brooklyn-born Jewish man had escaped the death penalty on August 25, 1913 for the alleged murder of a 13-year-old girl, Mary Phagan. During his politically charged trial, newspapers report that angry white mobs yelled, "Hang him! Let him hang!" (Dinnerstein 2008, p. 120). Frank indeed was sentenced to death, but the Governor of Georgia, under immense political pressure from the local Jewish community, had his sentence commuted to life in prison. White supremacists forged an organization called "The Knights of Mary Phagan" to avenge the girl's death. Its members included Marietta's finest: two former Superior Court judges, clergymen, a former sheriff, and local business owners (Dinnerstein 2008, p. 139). They kidnapped Frank from the state prison and drove him to a farm in Marietta. There, they hanged him. Children watched, holding their parents' hands. In one of the most iconic pictures of the ghastly murder, a man in a straw hat stares defiantly from the left corner of the frame. He is holding a camera. This haunting photograph illustrates two points: (1) the practice of bearing witness through emergent technologies certainly is not new; and (2) the notion of bearing witness is woven deeply into the historic narratives about human rights violations against marginalized groups. Regarding the first point, although media witnessing is a centuries-old practice, it has experienced a period of great renaissance amid the

proliferation of mobile devices. Roughly three-quarters of American adults (77%) now own a smartphone, up from 35 percent of Americans in 2011, when the Pew Research Center began collecting data on mobile device adoption (Smith 2017). Anyone who owns a mobile device that is equipped with a camera is a "dormant, potential journalist ready for activation" (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2009, p. 1). Diamond Reynolds was activated on July 6, 2016. "You shot four bullets into him, sir," she said in a preternaturally calm voice, adding, "He was just getting his license and registration, sir."

Philando Castile sat slumped beside Reynolds in the frame of the cellphone video footage. Blood soaked through his white T-shirt. His breathing was labored. Then it stopped. As the police officer who pulled over Reynolds and Castile seemed to come to grips with what he has just done, he screamed and swore repeatedly, until another officer removed Reynolds and her four-year-old daughter from the car.

"His wallet and license and registration, you told him to get it, sir," Reynolds said as she began to cry. She said, "Please don't tell me my boyfriend's gone. He don't deserve this. Please. He's a good man; he works for St. Paul Public school. He doesn't have no records or anything. He's never been in jail, anything. He's not a gang member, anything" (Ockerman, 2016).

As the raw footage of Reynolds's frontline black witnessing circulated first on Facebook Live, then spread to traditional news outlets, Black Lives Matter rallies sprung up throughout the country. Reynolds led a local march to the Minnesota governor's mansion the next day (Bosman, 2016). She told a crowd of assembled supporters and journalists: "I didn't do it for pity, I didn't do it for fame. I did it so that the world knows

that the police are not here to protect and serve us. They are here to assassinate us. They are here to kill us because we are black" (Bosman, 2016).

Reynolds's choice to live-stream the fatal shooting of Castile marked a watershed event: the first time a black witness offered reportage in real-time. Castile's death was significant also because it came just one day after another black witness' cellphone footage captured the murder of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on July 5, 2016. The video shows two white police officers wrestle the handcuffed black man to the ground before shooting him in the chest several times. Albert Reed, the black witness who filmed the fatal exchange, told *The New York Times* that he decided to release the cellphone footage after hearing reports in which the police said Mr. Sterling had reached for a gun. Reed said, "We don't have to beg the media to come and report on the stories. We can put it out on social media now, and the story gets told" (McPhate, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Although the contemporary black "oppositional gaze" (hooks 2014a, p. 115) is facilitated by the ubiquity of mobile devices and social networking sites, most of the academic literature on the use of cellphones and social media to produce protest journalism remains limited to case studies of amateur news reports that were produced in 2011, during the Arab Spring revolts (Mortensen, 2011) or the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations (Razsa, 2014; Castells, 2012). African Americans, however, generated an outpouring of cellphone videos and tweets in Ferguson in 2014, in response to the police killing of Michael Brown; in Baltimore in 2015, after Freddie Gray died in police custody; and across the nation in 2016, after the back-to-back police shootings of Alton

3

Sterling on July 5 in Louisiana, and Philando Castile on July 6 in Minnesota. The associated cellphone videos and tweets that emerged after these events have necessitated a fresh look at the act of witnessing, to highlight for the first time the intersecting cultural, technological, and racial forces that inspire black people living in these cities, and beyond, to report news with their cellphones. As I will argue, bearing witness while black carries with it a moral and legal weight. It takes on many of the characteristics of Jewish witnessing that occurred during and after the Holocaust. I will explore why African Americans have selected cellphone video as the medium of choice to produce a new brand of protest journalism that fuels activism online and in the real world. As mobile phones are nearly ubiquitous—and as the din of social media can be deafening for a researcher if data-gathering is not targeted—I chose to focus on the reportage of anti-police brutality activists who are affiliated, to varying degrees, with the Black Lives Matter Movement. The campaign has become one of the most prominent, sustained, African American social protests of the new millennium. It began on July 13, 2013, when a jury found George Zimmerman, a 28-year-old white man, not guilty of second-degree murder after he shot and killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager, in Sanford, Florida. Three grassroots activists launched the #BlackLivesMatter Twitter hashtag to protest what they believed to be a travesty of justice. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi circulated the hashtag widely on Twitter in 2013. It began trending in earnest in 2014, when a white police officer shot an unarmed black teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri (Garza, 2014). Race riots in Ferguson began and #BlackLivesMatter evolved from a Twitter campaign to actual street protests there, and in

other cities across the country. In 2015, Black Lives Matter protesters expanded further, organizing into nationwide chapters. Chapter members then began to follow candidates for the United States presidency on their campaign trails, hoping to start a dialogue about the string of highly publicized killings (ThinkProgress, 2015).

At the time of this study, Black Lives Matter has scaled internationally, with chapters in Berlin, Dublin, Israel, London, Palestine, Toronto, and multiple townships throughout South Africa (Khan, 2015). Although the tipping points that led to Black Lives Matter's establishment were rooted in efforts to end police brutality, the organization now states a broader purpose on its website. The group promotes its list of causes as such: (1) efforts to end mass incarceration of black people, (2) pathways to immigration, and (3) systemic support for dually-marginalized subgroups of black people, such as women, girls, the disabled, and members of the LGBTQIA community.[1] Despite the momentum that the Black Lives Matter campaign has achieved since its inception, to date, little research has been published about the protest journalism created by black witnesses from within the Movement. This dissertation investigates black witnesses' vibrant news production processes and its key documentarians, which belong to three distinct groups. Some of the interviewees for this dissertation tweet using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, and lead nonprofit chapters of the Black Lives Matter organization in their hometowns. Others tweet using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, yet align with sister organizations in the Movement. The third group of activists Tweet using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, yet work independently as activists that claim no formal

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[1] *See:* http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/.

affiliation to an organization, yet exhibit strong ties to leaders of Black Lives Matter chapters on Twitter. These three groups of anti-police brutality activists are unified in their dedication to producing mobile videos and Twitter updates on Movement-related news. Their evolving genre of protest journalism pushes discourse about police brutality—and other human rights violations against African Americans—into the global news cycle every day.

Significance of the Research

Whereas legacy media outlets have enjoyed for centuries the distinction as members of the "Fourth Estate," serving as elite government watchdogs in a press gallery on high (Gentzkow, Glaeser, & Goldin, 2006), mobile-mediated black witnessing functions from a positionality of *sous*veillance to watch powerful authorities from below (Mann & Ferenbok, 2013). Working class black men like Eric Garner or Alton Sterling died literally *underneath* the bent knees or shoes of police officers whose badge endowed a very specific set of privileges (Denvir, 2016). Those civilians who captured the Garner and Sterling deaths by cellphone video did so with extreme risk to their own safety. Thus, today's black witnesses form the urban equivalent of WikiLeaks for America's most beleaguered African American neighborhoods (Benkler, 2011), exposing some of the nation's most persistent social ills. Black witnesses from these vantage points help fill the editorial voids that the dying or defunct advocacy black newspapers and magazines of the 20th century left behind. To investigate how and why they "do" journalism, I posed the following research questions.

Research Questions

RQ1:   What is the lived experience of bearing witness while black?

RQ2:   How do anti-police brutality activists use mobile devices to engage in sustained acts of black witnessing?

RQ3:   How do anti-police brutality activists use Twitter as an *ad-hoc* news outlet to create and circulate protest journalism?

Methods

Three phases comprised the research for this dissertation: (1) theorizing an intersectional form of media witnessing, which served as a framework for the study; (2) conducting semi-structured interviews with prominent black witnesses to learn more about their lived experiences as producers of protest journalism; and (3) performing a descriptive analysis of the activists' Twitter timelines, to determine how Black Lives Matter activists use mobile devices and social media to bear witness.

Phase I—Theory. For reasons that I will outline later in the literature review portion of this dissertation, I found classic theories of media witnessing to be inadequate frames for analyzing the protest journalism that the Black Lives Matter Movement has inspired. No media witnessing theory heretofore incorporated Critical Race Theory to explain why black people are leveraging mobile and social media to self-publish news to Twitter at rates that surpass any other ethnic group. Having updated and developed the concept of "black witnessing," I argue that it: (1) assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; (2) co-opts racialized online spaces, such as Black Twitter, to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and (3) relies on

interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency to engage diverse audiences (Richardson, 2016).

    Phase II—Semi-Structured Interviews. The second phase of my study involved interviewing leading anti-police brutality activists who work as black witnesses. As I will outline in the methods chapter, I integrate two established philosophies while developing and refining my interview questions and proposed analysis of these questions: phenomenology and a functional approach to narrative analysis. Phenomenology is a mode of inquiry that focuses on the lived experiences of the study's subjects by evaluating one's (1) intentionality, (2) intuition, (3) empathy and (4) intersubjectivity (Husserl, 1970). In terms of this study, it means focusing on (1) the activist's stated purpose for practicing sustained acts of black witnessing; (2) whether or not they intuit their bearing witness as a form of protest journalism; (3) how they view their bodies in relation to the world, (for example, whether they see themselves in the body of a dead black man or woman who has been gunned down by police); and (4) how they believe their work as black witnesses impacts the broader Black Lives Matter Movement. In addition to phenomenology, I used narrative analysis to study the participants' answers. This approach considers how people construct their realities and meanings of events through telling stories.

    Phase III—Twitter Timeline Analysis. The third phase of this study used my concept of black witnessing as a frame to delve further into how anti-police brutality activists—especially those affiliated formally with Black Lives Matter—leverage mobile devices and Twitter to create and share Movement-related news. First, I adapted a well

known Twitter timeline coding scheme (Dann, 2010) to analyze the common formats of protest journalism on the social network. Next, I scraped Twitter's Application Programming Interface (API) to query which devices and mobile- or desktop-based apps that the activists used to post their news.

Definition of Important Terms

This dissertation includes several phrases that may require additional description or disambiguation. I offer these key terms here.

Black Lives Matter. I write out the organizational name "Black Lives Matter" when I am referring to the activist group in this study. When I am exploring the hashtag in use on Twitter, I reference it as #BlackLivesMatter. I do not use these two terms interchangeably, since some people tweet the hashtag but do not self-identify as a member of the organization.

Black Twitter. I use this term to describe the collective of African American Twitter users who engage typically in the following six steps of induction into a sub-network within the platform: (1) self-selection to participate in the group, (2) public self-identification as a black person, (3) performance of race as a black person by using certain cultural bona fides, (4) black hashtag (or blacktag) affirmation of online community values, (5) reaffirmation of values via culturally resonant language, and (6) achieving vindication via social change. (Clark, 2014, x).

Black witnessing. Black witnessing is a distinct form of media witnessing that has three elements: (1) it assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; (2) it co-opts racialized online spaces, such as

Black Twitter, to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and (3) it relies on interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency, to engage diverse audiences (Richardson, 2016).

Media witnessing. I do not use the terms "media witnessing" and "black witnessing" interchangeably in this dissertation. I posit in Chapter 1 that the former term refers broadly to what people do "by, through, and in the media" (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009). The latter term connotes a specific form of bearing witness, however, and it has the three qualifiers mentioned above. This dissertation argues that black witnessing is a form of protest journalism, which follows in the radical editorial footsteps of early 20th-century works by W.E.B. Du Bois or Booker T. Washington (Johnson & Johnson, 1977).

Mobile journalism. Mobile journalism is the practice of using smartphones and tablets to gather, produce and distribute news. When I use this term in the dissertation I am referring to the end-to-end process of using exclusively mobile devices to produce and publish a news story to relevant social media platforms. I do use this term interchangeably with the phrase "mobile-mediated black witnessing."

Sousveillance. While *sur*veillance involves monitoring people from above, *sous*veillance is the often-defiant practice of gazing from below. Generally, the sousveiller is less powerful than the authority figure that he or she watches, as seen in the instances of everyday citizens who have filmed select police officers committing acts of brutality (Mann & Ferenbok, 2013).

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1: The Theory of Black Witnessing. This chapter introduces my triangulated approach to "black witnessing." Black witnessing is a distinct form of media witnessing that assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; co-opts racialized online spaces, such as Black Twitter, to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and relies on interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency, to engage diverse audiences. While the phenomenon of African Americans using the latest technologies to produce and transmit sousveillance-style journalism is not new, I explain that the speed with which black subgroups within the general black population communicate, internally and externally, has reshaped the imagined publics and counterpublics of raced spaces, both in the real-world and online.

Chapter 2: Race, News Myths, and Narratives of Control. This literature review explores the relevant scholarship in journalism, sociology and media psychology that explains the news media's role in shaping and sustaining racial stereotypes. Additionally, the chapter offers an overview of theories of power, ranging from Karl Marx to Michel Foucault, to explain how the concept of *sous*veillance originated. This literature review is essential to building the argument that anti-police brutality activists often hit "record" because they feel: (1) a moral and legal duty to document human rights injustices against blacks, (2) a desire to debunk racist news myths about black people, and (3) a duty to control news narratives about police brutality.

Chapter 3: Methods—Mining for the Media Makers. This chapter explains my mixed-methods approach to investigating my research questions. First, I describe my phenomenological style of developing and analyzing the semistructured interview questions. Phenomenology is a mode of inquiry that focuses on the lived experiences of the study's subjects by evaluating one's intentionality, intuition, empathy and intersubjectivity (Husserl, 1970). Additionally, I explain how I modified a popular Twitter timeline analysis scheme to explore the black witnesses' social media feeds. Stephen Dann (2010) devised a scheme originally to aid quantitative studies of Twitter timelines —especially in terms of content analysis. I altered his scheme for this study, however, to glean both quantitative data (such as user habits and other temporal trends) and qualitative data (such as the various protest news "beats" that the activists cover).

Chapter 4: Results—Motivations. This first "results" chapter shows how activists reflect on what it means to them to bear witness while black. They share three central themes of their lived experience: revision, responsibility, and redress. Many of the witnesses said that seeing inaccuracies in official news stories were the impetus for publishing revised reports of local Black Lives Matter-inspired protests or meetings. Moreover, participants in this study overwhelmingly referred to their work as a social responsibility. Lastly, the witnesses commonly expressed a desire to use journalism as a vehicle for change—although they disagree on whether or not black witnesses should work with legacy media to report on the Movement.

Chapter 5: Results—Moments. I summarize the six-step process in which the activists engage to produce news via Twitter in this second results chapter. The first three

steps, which include (1) observation, (2) discussion, and (3) authentication, occur in the enclaves of Black Twitter. The activists speak directly to each other on Twitter using "@" replies or encourage private communiqué via the platform's direct messaging (DM) feature. In this phase of news production they are sharing bits of hearsay, verifying breaking news, and assigning stories to activists who are closest to the scene. In the second news production phase, the activists move on to the (4) production, (5) publication, and (6) agitation performative steps. This occurs in the counterpublic, for all to see. The activists use conventions such as the hashtag to help news audiences find the content readily. The news stories appear in various formats, such as live stream video and photo essays. The activists share these media widely to engender dialogue about the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Chapter 6: Conclusion. I end this study with a discussion of what the lived experiences of black witnesses might tell us about the future of protest journalism. I explain how one's race, class, and political status may impact one's likeliness to engage in news production. Moreover, I suggest future areas of study that explore how the 20th-century decline in African American advocacy journalism makes today's mobile-mediated black witnessing all the more necessary.

Chapter 1—The Theory of Black Witnessing

"Black people need witnesses in this hostile world."

—James Baldwin[2]

Classic Media Witnessing Theory

Frosh and Pinchevski (2009) claimed that the term "media witnessing" seems redundant at first glance since every act of witnessing is mediated in some way. At the most basic level, one person offers an account of events to another person who was not there. In journalistic settings this process is scalable, so that one person can deliver a narrative account to mass audiences. Frosh and Pinchevski argued that, since news production involves three possible processes, this is where simplistic definitions of media witnessing begin to disintegrate. They wrote "[Media witnessing] refers simultaneously to...witnesses *in* the media, witnessing *by* the media, and witnessing *through* the media (2009, p. 1). In the instance of the 1915 Leo Frank killing, journalists could interview eyewitnesses to the hanging and quote them in a story; journalists could serve as primary witnesses themselves; or anyone, like the unnamed man holding a camera in the photograph, could use media production devices to bear witness to an event without a professional journalist as an intermediary. Frosh and Pinchevski claimed that failing to clarify the source of the gaze conflates the term "media witnessing," thus causing it to "teeter on the brink of tautology" (2009, p. 1). Frosh and Pinchevski argued further that two historic events have created two distinct categories of witnesses: the authoritative,

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[2] Miller, J. L. (1999). The discovery of what it means to be a witness: James Baldwin's dialectics of difference. In D. A. McBride (Ed.), *James Baldwin now*, pp. 331-359. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Holocaust-style witness who saw atrocities firsthand and lived to tell about it, and the distant television viewer witnesses of September 11, 2001, who were not at Ground Zero when terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center, but remember seeing the events recounted *through* the media. The September 11 witnesses are just as authoritative as Holocaust witnesses, Frosh and Pinchevski insisted, since they contribute to the collective memory of that day.

Not all scholars agree that distant witnessing is just as effective as firsthand viewing, however. John Durham Peters (2009, p. 35) argued that being present matters. He wrote: "The copy, like hearsay, is indefinitely repeatable; the event is singular, and its witnesses are forever irreplaceable in their privileged relation to it." Peters proposed that we can define witnessing on a continuum, in four different ways: being there, live transmission, historicity, and recording. "Being there" is the strongest kind of witnessing, since it means that one was a part of an assembled audience, such as a concert, game or theater. Live transmission is the next strongest form of witnessing, since it describes an audience that was part of a simultaneous broadcast. Historicity refers to witnesses who visit a museum or a shrine, where events happened long ago in the same spot, but not necessarily during the lifetime of the witness. Lastly, a recording, presented as a book, CD or video, is the weakest form of witnessing, Peters wrote, since the viewer does not have to occupy the same space and time as the original event.

Both definitions of media witnessing—as either a tripartite bundle of accounts *by*, *of* or *through* the media, or as a quadripartite matrix divided along planes of space and time—have provided valuable frameworks for media scholars to explain the works of

citizen journalists who have reported the tsunami that rocked South East Asia in 2004 (Bal & Baruh, 2015); the Virginia Tech massacre of 2007 (Allan & Peters, 2015); or the shooting of Iranian activist Neda Agha-Soltan in 2009 (Greenwood and Thomas, 2015; Paschalidis, 2015). These frames reach its epistemological limits when studying the amateur reportage of the Ferguson and Baltimore protests, however, since the Frosh-Pinchevski model does not illuminate *why* someone would want to be a witness by, of, or through the media in the first place. Likewise, Peters's argument—that recording is the weakest form of witnessing—seems to fall apart when one remarks the thousands of international Black Lives Matter protesters who were not present in Ferguson or Baltimore to view firsthand Michael Brown's or Freddie Gray's murders respectively, yet feel as if they did, so powerfully that they take up picket signs in the slain men's defense.

In this chapter, I offer three broad theoretical frames to explore black witnessing. First, I review the literature that defines Holocaust-era Jewish witnessing, to demonstrate the academic precedence for amplified attention to reports from an oppressed people. Then, I examine the growing body of literature that investigates so-called Black Twitter and its potentialities for creating what Manuel Castells (2012) has called "networks of outrage and hope." Lastly, I survey the writings of scholars who have attempted to define the black public sphere as a distinct discursive subgroup that has the power to push its concerns through to mainstream news media outlets and news audiences when necessary. I surmise that synthesizing these three theories—of media witnessing as an unapologetic form of advocacy journalism; of Black Twitter as an *ad-hoc*, new-millennium news outlet; and of the black public sphere's digital resurrection since the decline of the

traditional Black press in the latter half of the 20th century, I believe we will find a flourishing research area that is ripe for scholarly investigation.

The Three Elements of Black Witnessing

Black witnessing: (1) assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; (2) co-opts racialized online spaces to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and (3) relies on interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency, to engage diverse audiences. Today's black witnesses can be frontline witnesses (Gregory, 2015; Gregory, 2006) like Feidin Santana, who filmed Michael Slager, a white police officer, shoot Walter Scott, an unarmed black man, in South Carolina in 2015. Similarly, Kevin Moore captured the last images of his best friend Freddie Gray alive in Baltimore before Gray's crumpled body was hauled into a Baltimore city police van in 2015. Modern black witnesses also can be distant witnesses (Ong, 2014), who are galvanized to action after viewing video from the front lines, like the thousands of African Americans who staged demonstrations in New York after the cellphone footage of Eric Garner's fatal scuffle with the city's police department went viral in late 2014. In the most poignant moment of the cellphone video, Garner, who was black and unarmed, gasped, "I can't breathe," as he tried to escape a white police officer's illegal chokehold. These last words became a Trending Topic on Twitter and a protest slogan for those who hoisted pickets.

Three established communication theories support my suggested characteristics of black witnessing. First, I offer a summary of media witnessing during and after the Holocaust, to illustrate why media scholars should view some citizen journalism through

17

an ethnocentric frame. Then, I explain how the rise of so-called "Black Twitter" gave

black witnesses an ideal news distribution tool. I conclude by explaining how three types

of black public spheres circulate the news that black witnesses create.

The "Crisis of Witnessing" and its Ethnocentrisms

The notion of "bearing witness" has become so intertwined with evidence of

Jewish persecution that the Anti-Defamation League, which was founded in 1913 in

response to Leo Frank's death, trademarked the phrase in 1996 for a national educational

campaign about the Holocaust.[3] Historically, bearing witness to the Holocaust meant

becoming a martyr, for only the people who died from the atrocities wrought upon them

witnessed the entire narrative arc of the tragedy—from the initial encounter with the

oppressor on to death. Within this paradigm it is perhaps easy to understand then, why the

Greek word for "witness" is *mártys*. While martyrs are to be revered, their deaths still

leave us with incomplete narratives. Felman and Laub (1992) called this extermination of

voices the "crisis of witnessing." Since none but those who died can serve as the

complete witnesses, we are left only with the testimonies of the survivors who often find

it too painful to remember. Journalists commonly preserve the stories of those who find

the words to speak as oral histories, books, and documentary films to form our collective

memory of a trauma long ago (Zelizer, 2010). The "crisis of witnessing" paradigm is not

limited to the early 20th-century Jewish experience, however. It has been sustained by

contemporary studies of human rights violations too (Goodman & Meyers 2012;

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[3] This trademark appears to have expired in 2007, yet it is searchable still within the U.S. Patent and
Trademark Office's Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS). Use the search terms "bearing
witness" at http://tmsearch.uspto.gov/.

Mansbach 2015; Ong 2014). Mansbach explained that appraising the act of witnessing through an ethnocentric frame promotes "identification with the Other, thus undermining cases of dehumanization (2015, p. 1). Mansbach interrogated this theory in an analysis of the Checkpoint Watch movement, in which Israeli women documented stories of Palestinian suffering at various checkpoints to shed light on the impact of the Israeli Occupation (2015, 2). Mansbach wrote that the videos the Israeli women created harkened back to the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust to humanize the Palestinians as people, and not as politically abstract enemies.

The crisis of witnessing is an apt frame through which to study the outpouring of black citizen journalism in Ferguson and Baltimore too. In the Jewish tradition of witnessing, survivors speak to commemorate the slain, and to verify that atrocities indeed transpired. In doing so, witnesses help create a long, thematic thread of narrative that links similar human rights violations to one another throughout history, rather than regarding each new violation as an isolated incident. Just as the modern persecution of the Jews almost always reflects on the Holocaust, modern black witnessing carries the spirit of the US Civil Rights Movement, which peaked during the 1960s. When African American distant witnesses in Ferguson took to the streets to protest the murder of Michael Brown, for example, they used mobile devices and social media to circulate familiar visual tropes that were associated commonly with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In one popular photo an African-American man held a poster that read, "I am a man."[4] This slogan has deep historic roots in the black community (Estes, 2000; Green, 2004). On

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[4] Price, W. & Bryant L. (2014). I am a man. *The St. Louis American*. Retrieved from: http://bit.ly/1pJrwDx.

February 1, 1968, two black sanitation workers in Memphis were crushed to death by a malfunctioning garbage truck. Despite public appeals from colleagues to address the unsafe working conditions for blacks in this industry, the white city leadership remained silent (Estes, 2000). Twelve days later, 1,300 black men from the Memphis Department of Public Works went on strike. They dressed in their Sunday best and wielded posters that read "I <u>am</u> a man."[5] This declaration of black masculinity attracted the attention of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other local leaders of the NAACP, who joined the strike (Honey, 2011, p. 255). King traveled to Memphis to support the effort in February 1968 and settled in for what he believed would be a long fight. On April 3, 1968, he told the weary group of men, "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now… I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land" (Carson & Shepard, 2001, pp. 222-223). The next day, as King was leaving the Lorraine Motel for dinner, he was shot on the balcony. When modern protestors in Ferguson carry the "I <u>am</u> a man" posters, they invoke the crisis of King bearing witness, for he is no more able to recount his own death than Leo Frank. Additionally, the ethnocentric crisis of witnessing frame may explain why the distant black witness in Ferguson, who may not have seen police officer Darren Wilson shoot Michael Brown, feels compelled still to behave much like a Holocaust survivor, bearing witness to speak for the slain.

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[5] Copley, R. (1968). Memphis sanitation workers strike. *NBC News Photo Blog*. Retrieved from: <u>http://nbcnews.to/1ZJX0Jq</u>.

In another contemporary example of black witnessing, an African American Ferguson protestor holds up his fist in the traditional symbolic gesture of the Black Power Movement of decades past.[6] African Americans collectively remember it as the official salute of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (Davis, 1994). In the same year that King was assassinated, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists at the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games as they accepted their medals.[7] They later told journalists that they were protesting racism (Wiggins, 1992). According to an October 17, 1968 BBC report, Smith said, "We are black and we are proud of being black. Black America will understand what we did tonight."

Former US Attorney General Eric Holder offered yet another example of how black witnessing very closely resembles Jewish witnessing after the Holocaust, what with its linked narrative threads throughout history. After a November 2014 tree planting ceremony to honor Emmett Till, MSNBC reported that Holder said: "The struggle goes on. And it's not only Ferguson, there are other communities around our country where we are dealing with relationships that are not what they should be, be they official communities they are supposed to serve or whether it's on a more personal level. There is an enduring legacy that Emmett Till has left with us that we still have to confront as a nation."[8] By invoking the spirit of Emmett Till—the teenaged boy who left Chicago for Mississippi to spend the summer of 1955 with family, only to die at the hands of white

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[6] Olson, S. (2014). Demetrus Washington protests in Ferguson, Missouri. *Aljazeera America*. Retrieved from: http://bit.ly/XlHBAV.

[7] Cozzi, A. (1968). Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Mexican Olympic Games. *Mondadori Publishers*. Retrieved from: http://bit.ly/22xcKkg.

[8] Holder's excerpted speech appears in this video: http://on.msnbc.com/2pP9xi0.

supremacists who lynched him and threw him into a river after he flirted with a white woman—Holder recognized the black witnessing tradition of beginning the narrative thread with Till, then adding successive black male deaths as human rights violations to a lengthy list. Alexander (1994) has written extensively about the black witnesses' collective memory of viewing Till's corpse. She cited lines from the late boxer Muhammad Ali's autobiography, in which he recounted seeing the pictures of a maimed Till for the first time. He recalled: "I felt a deep kinship to him when I learned he was born the same year and day that I was. My father and I talked about it at night and dramatized the crime. I couldn't get Emmett out of my mind until one evening I thought of a way to get back at white people for his death" (1994, p. 89). Similarly, Charlyne Hunter-Gault, a celebrated black journalist explained: "It happened in August, 1955, and maybe because he was more or less our age, it gripped us in a way that perhaps even the lynching of an older black man might not have. 'It was the first time we'd known a young person to die,' recalled Wilma, who, like me, was then entering eighth grade. For both of us, pictures of his limp, water soaked body in the newspapers and in *Jet*, Black America's weekly news bible, were worse than any image we had ever seen outside of a horror movie…" (Alexander 1994, p. 88).

Fifty years after Till's murder, Devin Allen invoked his spirit still in a political fashion choice. Allen's amateur photographs of the Baltimore protests in 2015 made the cover of *TIME* magazine that April (Laurent, p. 2015). In a posed picture, the celebrated black witness is wearing a T-shirt that lists slain black men who died at the hands of

white supremacist vigilantes or law enforcement officers.[9] The list begins with Till and ends with an ellipsis, suggesting that more names are to follow. Similarly, one of Ferguson's foremost black witnesses, Samuel Sinyangwe, created a running list of unarmed African Americans who were killed by police in 2014.

In just these three examples, I find that the black "crisis of witnessing" emerges as an ethnocentric frame worth exploring. Those interested in studying Ferguson or Baltimore through this paradigm also may want to review the literature on former slave-cum-journalist Ida B. Wells as a foremost black witness to lynching in the American South. Her testimonies provide more modern, turn-of-the-20th-century historical grounding. In 1892, Wells mourned the loss of three black, male friends who died at the hands of a white lynch mob in her seminal text, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases*. She explained that the men had been upstanding business owners who stoked the ire of white supremacists in the town, as their shops were very prosperous and so redirected black dollars away from the white establishments. Late one night, a few white men from the town entered the store and threatened its owners to shutter it, or else. The black grocers armed themselves instead. When the white men returned, a few nights later, the black shopkeepers opened fire. They were incarcerated promptly, despite their attorney's insistence that the shooting was in self-defense. In the early morning, the black grocers were dragged from the local jail without shoes or hats, Wells wrote, and they were shot alongside the railroad tracks just as a train was passing, to deafen the sound. A jury found that the shooters could not be determined. By the end of Wells's account, she

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[9] Davis, J. (2015). Devin Allen. *Scout Project*. Retrieved from: http://bit.ly/1MDCQpb.

warned black readers "The lesson this teaches and which every Afro-American should ponder well, is that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give." Shortly after she published her piece in her newspaper, the Memphis *Free Speech*, an angry white mob burned her newspaper office to the ground. Wells exiled herself to the North and began work for the *New York Age* (Wells, 2013, p. 58). She made witnessing lynching her life's work and even helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Wells, 2013, p. 327). Strains of Wells's journalism remain today. Instead of rifles, however, black witnesses have taken up smartphones.

The "Weighty Baggage"

In an aptly named *TIME* magazine article entitled *The Witness*, Ramsey Orta expressed his regret at filming Eric Garner's last gasps of, "I can't breathe" on July 17, 2014. Orta insisted that New York City police harass him regularly still. The same *TIME* article also featured Feidin Santana, who captured Walter Scott's death. Like Orta, Santana had reservations about being a witness. He hesitated two days before handing over the footage to the family, and that was only after he saw inaccurate local television accounts of what happened, he said (Sanburn, 2015). Kevin Moore of Baltimore filmed his friend Freddie Gray being brutalized by Baltimore City law enforcement officers, who were both white and black. Gray later died of spinal injuries that he sustained during his beating. Moore went on to become a local pariah after being featured prominently in the CNN documentary, "Who Killed Freddie Gray?" In these three instances, all of these men put their bodies and their future safety at risk to film what they believed to be human

rights violations. This martyr mindset stems from what Peters calls, "weighty baggage" (2009, p. 24). He wrote "The 'baggage' has three main interrelated sources: law, theology, and atrocity." In law, the witness is a privileged source of information upon which a judgment will be based. When one takes the stand to testify, one swears an oath to God that he or she will be truthful or else risk punishment. In Christianity, early witnesses became martyrs when they revealed their faiths. To speak the truth about God's power usually meant persecution. Additionally, witnessing in the Christian faith brought with it sacred responsibility as, one of the Ten Commandments is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20:16 KJV). Lastly, the notion of atrocity is linked inextricably with witnessing. Although contemporary scholars of media witnessing often argue that cellphone videography places too much distance between the exotic "Other" (Allan, Sonwalkar, & Carter, 2007; Ong, 2014), African Americans, of any socioeconomic class, tend to see themselves in the battered body of another black person in these kinds of amateur footage (Alexander, 1994). The sentiment is that if this happened to someone who looked like them, then it could very well *be* them—even if they are well educated and relatively affluent.

For example, even Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. was not immune to racial profiling from the Boston police. When whites see the videos of Eric Garner, Walter Scott, or Freddie Gray being brutalized, however, they may be able to maintain a safe amount of narrative space. They do not carry the weighty baggage of blackness, so they may not understand why seeing such videos makes some black people want to riot. Analyzing black peoples' reactions to the Rodney King verdict of 1992,

where four white police officers were acquitted of assault with a deadly weapon in a highly publicized police brutality case, Alexander found evidence of weighty baggage. One black distant witness said, "When I saw the Rodney King video I thought of **myself** [*emphasis mine*] laying on the ground and getting beat." Another black distant witness said, "Somebody brought a video to school—the video of Rodney King—and then somebody put it on the television and then everybody just started to break windows and everything—then some people got so mad they broke the television" (Alexander, 1994, p. 85). Just as many survivors of the Jewish Holocaust felt compelled to bear witness to atrocity, modern African Americans feel led to use their cellphones to report today's news of police brutality, and other human rights violations against their personhood. Unlike the Holocaust survivors, who fled persecution and found asylum in foreign lands, however, groups of repressed blacks in 21st-century America have nowhere else to go. Black witnessing happens, then, in real-time on U.S. soil. When its gaze is upon police gunning down unarmed black men, women and children, black witnesses imagine themselves as participating in a long line of storytellers—beginning with witnessing *through* the media 60-year-old pictures of Emmett Till's dead body, and ending with witnessing *by* the media (that these witnesses produce) the newest member to join the macabre club of martyred black people. As with all witnessing, a medium must carry the message.

The Leverage of Black Twitter as a News Outlet

"I JUST SAW SOMEONE DIE OMFG"

With these six words, Twitter user @TheePharaoh, also known as Emanuel Freeman, went from a dormant journalist waiting to be activated, to a full-fledged black witness. Just after 12 p.m. on Saturday, August 9, 2014, he began to tweet live:

"Im about to hyperventilate"

"@allovevie the police just shot someone dead in front of my crib yo"

His next tweet was a photo of Michael Brown lying in the street. An officer who appeared to be Darren Wilson, who was identified later as Brown's killer, stood over his body. Freeman kept tweeting. He described the wails of Brown's mother. He posted another picture of an unidentified officer carrying a rifle. By Sunday, Freeman thanked his Twitter followers for their concern for his safety. By the following Wednesday, he wrote, "I AM DONE TWEETING ABOUT THE SITUATION" (Crilly, 2014; Ries, 2014). Freeman never granted an official interview to legacy media outlets to recount what he witnessed. He did not have to; he had "Black Twitter." In Ferguson, Baltimore and beyond, African Americans have adopted Twitter as their social networking platform of choice for conveying breaking news.

Twitter launched in March 2006 with a basic question: "What are you doing?" In 140 characters or less, everyday people shared what they observed about the world around them, and how they perceived themselves in it. In a formative article about the origins of Twitter and its potential uses, a team of scholars analyzed the social network to identify its early adopters, their motivations, and the techniques they used to find like-

minded people. The researchers determined that people used Twitter to converse, share information, and report news. Users alternated between information sources and information seekers in a dynamic system of both strong and loose relationships (Java, Finin, Song & Tseng, 2007). Twitter use among the general population grew rapidly after its inception. Armstrong and Gao (2010) noted:

> By February 2009, 11% of online American Internet users said they use Twitter to update their status online and share with others. According to Nielsen Online, visitors to Twitter increased 1,382% in 1 year, from 475,000 unique visitors in February 2008 to 7 million in February 2009, making it one of the fastest growing websites. By June 2010, that number had climbed to 28 million unique visitors (p. 222).

As Twitter became a popular culture phenomenon, journalists began to question whether it could be operationalized as a professional tool. In 2009, Farhi predicted that journalists would use Twitter one day to mine for news sources and story ideas, and to crowdsource large swaths of people to gather facts and opinions. By 2010, researchers investigated the extent to which Farhi's normative theories were feasible (Ahmad, 2010; Artwick, 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012). The proliferation of mobile devices lowered the barrier of entry for Twitter participation further, so that anyone with a smartphone and a WIFI connection could create and disseminate various forms of multimedia storytelling throughout the network—especially the media witnesses who tapped into "Black Twitter." Blogger Choire Sicha coined this term in his 2009 post, "What Were Black People Talking About on Twitter Last Night." Sicha (2009) wrote, "At the risk of getting randomly harshed on by the Internet, I cannot keep quiet about my obsession with Late Night Black People Twitter, an obsession I know some of you other white people share, because it is awesome" (p. 1).

Not all whites agreed, however, that black participation was welcome on the platform. Andre Brock (2012) explained that technology blogger Nick Douglas recounted a conversation with an offended white male friend who said, "These people don't have real Twitter friends. So they all respond to trending topics. And that's the game, that's how they use Twitter" (p. 542). One year later, journalist Farhad Manjoo (2010) attempted to delve deeper, Brock wrote, when he penned the controversial *Slate* piece, "How Black People Use Twitter," which featured an illustration of Twitter's logo bird with brown feathers instead of its customary blue plumage, donning a Hip hop-style athletic cap. Manjoo posed this litany of questions about Black Twitter:

> Are black people participating in these types of conversations more often than nonblacks? Are other identifiable groups starting similar kinds of hashtags, but it's only those initiated by African-Americans that are hitting the trending topics list? If that's true, what is it about the way black people use Twitter that makes their conversations so popular? Then there's the apparent segregation in these tags. While you begin to see some nonblack faces after a trending topic hits Twitter's home page, the early participants in these tags are almost all black. Does this suggest a break between blacks and nonblacks on Twitter—that real-life segregation is being mirrored online? (p. 1)

In an October 28, 2015 interview with Meredith Clark, she explained that she chose to write her dissertation on Black Twitter because she was tired of seeing mainstream journalists get it wrong. Clark self-identifies as a member of Black Twitter's in-group and felt that both Sicha and Manjoo lacked the cultural competency to explain fully the value of Black Twitter. In short, to paraphrase the founders of the first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, who wrote, "We wish to plead our own cause," Clark said that most Black Twitter users similarly felt a responsibility "to tweet our own cause," and entitled her dissertation thusly. While jokes and puns were an entertaining feature of Black Twitter's daily exchanges, Clark said that these elements do not comprise its

complete oeuvre. Her 2014 dissertation triangulated data gleaned during four years of inquiry, through a content analysis of traditional news media, a discourse analysis of selected tweets, and semi-structured interviews with 36 unique Twitter users.

Clark discovered that Black Twitter users commonly engage in the following six steps of induction into the sub-network: (1) self-selection to participate in the group, (2) public self-identification as a black person, (3) performance of race as a black person by using certain cultural bona fides, (4) black hashtag (or blacktag) affirmation of online community values, (5) reaffirmation of values via culturally resonant language, and (6) achieving vindication via social change. Overall, Black Twitter is a "multi-level community and network building process" (Clark, 2014, p. x).

It should be noted that Black Twitter is not monolithic. Not all black users comprise Black Twitter. Similarly, not all Black Twitter in-group members share the same ideologies. However, many prominent black witnesses who have garnered national recognition for their coverage of Ferguson and Baltimore are a part of Black Twitter. As such, they create an *ad-hoc* news outlet that breaks news and supplies updates in real-time, rivaling some of the most time-honored legacy media. They achieve this by harnessing the power of interlocking layers of the black public sphere, which is stratified by levels of political agency and varying desires to engage the general public at times of peak crisis.

The Black Public Sphere

As news of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination spread on April 4, 1968, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that some blacks in the city convened to discuss retaliation

that night. It was decided that the children, ages 12 to 15, would throw bricks into the windows of white establishments, since they would not be charged as adults. Next, the older teens, between 17 and 18 years of age, set fire to some white businesses while looting others that sold valuable property. For two days, Baltimore smoldered. When the smoke cleared, six people were dead and more than 1,000 fires generated $8 million in damages (Dilts, 1968). That same month, nearly 50 years later in April 2015, an irate group of young African-Americans set fire to Baltimore again—this time for the murder of Freddie Gray. They were protesting the killing of the 25-year-old African-American male who sustained fatal spinal injuries while in police custody. As Gray lay in a coma from April 15 to April 18, black witnesses *in* the media recounted to professional journalists the excessive force used during his arrest; blacks made witnesses *by* the media became activated by their cellphones to leak recorded footage of Gray's last public moments; and black witnesses *through* the media watched on television as pockets of the city went up in flames. It may be incredible to some that the same city that claimed the life of Freddie Gray was a saving grace to Frederick Douglass, who wrote in his 1852 autobiography, "Going to live at Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity."

Connecting such historic arcs of narrative, from the King riots to the Gray riots, and from Freddie Gray back to Frederick Douglass are the consummate work of the black public sphere that seeks to highlight social injustice leveled against blacks as thematic, rather than episodic (Antony & Thomas, 2010; Alexander, 1994; Baker, 1994). Whether it has been through the fiery oratory of Frederick Douglass denouncing slavery, or in the

31

fiery protest of a frustrated people rioting, the black public sphere has leveraged the technological medium of the era to debate, mourn, scream and rejoice collectively. Today's mobile and social media, for example, have amplified and accelerated these types of cultural communiqué in ways that the Black press of old, such as the *Chicago Defender* newspaper or *Ebony* magazine, could not have achieved—even in its heyday.

Habermas (1991) imagined the public sphere as a physical place where men met to discuss matters of political significance. In salons and coffeehouses across late-17th-century Great Britain and 18th century France, Habermas proposed that dialogue between ordinary people, away from the prying eyes of the State, had the power to shape democracies. Habermas fancied these dignified exchanges as essential to a civil society that desired to engage its citizenry fully. Numerous scholars have challenged Habermas's theory on the basis that it is Eurocentric (Gunaratne, 2006; Linke, 1999; Gregory, 1994) and silent on how the exclusion of women (Pough, 2004; Collins, 2000), people of color (Folami, 2007; Baker, 1994) and members of the working class affect policymaking and nation building. Fraser (1990) has written perhaps the most famous refutation to Habermas, asserting "[T]he bourgeois conception of the public sphere, as described by Habermas, is not adequate for the critique of the limits of actually existing democracy in late capitalist societies" (p. 77). Instead, she suggests that scholars consider a "multiplicity of publics," especially within "stratified societies and egalitarian societies" (p. 77). African-American scholars built on this idea by proposing a new ethnocentric theory in 1995, when they penned the anthology, *The Black Public Sphere*. In the introduction to the text, its 16 authors asserted:

32

> "The black public sphere—as a critical social imaginary—does not centrally rely on the world of magazines and coffee shops, salons and highbrow tracts. It draws energy from the vernacular practices of street talk and new musics, radio shows and church voices, entrepreneurship and circulation. Its task is not the provision of security for the freedom of conversation among intellectuals, as was the case with the bourgeois public spheres of earlier centuries. Rather, it marks a wider sphere of critical practice and visionary politics, in which intellectuals can join with the energies of the street, the school, the church, and the city to constitute a challenge to the exclusionary violence of much public space in the United States" (The Black Public Sphere Collective, 1995, p. 3).

By this definition, I gather that the black public sphere is a place where members of the in-group signify their subaltern identities by using specific cultural bona fides, and participate in dynamic discursive practices in both virtual and physical spaces around the world. In this manner, Black Twitter is as much a part of the black public sphere as black "barbershops, bibles and BET [Black Entertainment Television]" (Harris-Lacewell 2004, p. 1). As straightforward as both definitions may seem, there are several theoretical conditions of which scholars should be aware when they are analyzing black witnessing from within this frame.

Academics should note that not all black public spheres are readily visible. Secondly, not all former loci of black debate continue to serve as effective means of communication. Lastly, to complicate matters further, the black public sphere does not comprise all black people. There are subgroups even within this subgroup, which subjects some black witnesses (such as black members of the LGBTQIA community, for example) to be marginalized further still. Squires (2002) addressed these three problems by considering three types of subaltern black spheres: the enclave, the counterpublic and the satellite. She argued that we should not think of multiple, coexisting spheres merely as

counterpublics that are based on a shared marginal identity, such as "people of color, women, homosexuals, religious minorities, and immigrant groups" that have coalesced as a response to exclusionary politics (Squires, 2002, p. 446). Instead she wrote we should classify a subaltern counterpublic by the political climate in which it originated, its members' willingness to engage in dialogues with the dominant public, and its members' agency to create media resources. For these reasons, I will use Squires's foregoing definitions of black subaltern public spheres—and not Fraser's—to frame this study.

The enclave. Not all black counterpublics are readily visible. Harris-Lacewell explained (2004), "At the turn of the century Du Bois described black life as an existence that occurred behind a veil. He understood that when white Americans forcibly separated themselves from blacks, they lowered a dark shroud between the races that allowed a certain covert reality for African Americans to operate beyond the reach of whites. A veil is opaque but not impenetrable" (p. xxi). Harris-Lacewell is clever to invoke the letters of Du Bois here, insofar as he introduced the theory of double-consciousness to the academy. In Du Bois's seminal volume, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he lamented "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 7). This psychological battle that black America faced—to accept that mainstream America viewed it as inferior, all while knowing and feeling that it was equal—forced much of the black public sphere,

in its infancy, to exist within an enclave. In this context, the enclave is a safe space that is

hidden from the view of the oppressor. Its members often possess "few material, political,

legal, or media resources," yet desire to "preserve culture, foster resistance [and] create

strategies of the future" (Squires, 2002, p. 458). An example of such a black public

sphere would be African Americans who lived through slavery in the Jim Crow South,

Squires wrote. Since the slaves lived under the watchful eyes of their overseers and

plantation owners, they either had to code their discourse about fleeing to freedom in

song or meet privately. Free blacks in the North formed enclaves too, battling state-

sponsored segregation by forming separate black social institutions to "foster their public

speaking skills, create campaigns, and facilitate resistance" (Squires, 2002, p. 458).

While the ideologies and political goals of both groups of blacks may have been

different, both fall within the enclave model since neither group came in contact with the

dominant public often. When it did, select leaders performed what Squires called highly

scripted "public transcripts" (Squires, 2002, p. 458). This may look like an official

pamphlet from Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells to protest the lack of African

American exhibits at the World's Fair (Douglass, Wells, Penn, Barnett, & Rydell, 1893).

In modern terms, the enclaved black public sphere structure is found still within the walls

of the Historically Black College or University (LeMelle, 2002), the "Divine Nine" black

fraternities or sororities (Ross, 2001), or within black professional organizations, such as

the National Association of Black Journalists (Dawkins, 1997). While critics of these

organizations today question their relevance, often claiming that such groups promote

divisiveness, Squires argued that its members will perpetuate its existence, "even when

they benefit from increased political rights or friendlier social relations," because they offer its participants "independent spaces to retreat to in times of need or during negotiations with outsiders" (2002, 459).

Scholars may question whether Black Twitter can serve as a legitimate enclave since it is public facing. Is Black Twitter a safe space for black witnesses to introduce new social topics to the group agenda, or does it subject members of the in-group to violence and state-sponsored surveillance? These are timely research questions, since numerous mainstream media reports have documented that the New York Police Department regularly spied on local activists who tweeted under the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, harkening back to the days that the FBI spied on the Black Panther Party during its infamous Counter Intelligence Project, better known as COINTELPRO (Blake, 2015; Craven, 2015).

The counterpublic. Whereas the enclave model of the black public sphere seeks to shelter its participants from the volatile outside world, the counterpublic deliberately ventures "outside of safe, enclave spaces to argue against dominant conceptions of the group and to describe group interests" (Squires, 2002, p. 460). While intense oppression gave birth to the enclave, counterpublics actually emerge because some measure of subjugation has subsided and the oppressed group has gained more resources. This emboldened black public sphere creates protest rhetoric, facilitates increased communication between the marginalized and the powerful, and distributes media that tout an unapologetically subjective point of view. The goals of this form of black public sphere are to foster resistance, create coalitions with other subaltern groups, test

36

arguments and strategies for reform in wider publics, and persuade outsiders to change their viewpoints on oppressive practices.

Members of this black counterpublic public sphere often retreat to enclaves, such as the black church, during times of negotiation or strategizing. Squires noted that African Americans who participated in the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 to 1970 fit this paradigm. She wrote: "the mass public protests—sit-ins, marches, boycotts, voter registration drives, as well as the revaluation of African and Afrocentric arts, physical characteristics, and speech—were all central elements of daily life for a large number of African Americans. This intense, widespread involvement set the tone and agenda for black politics and discourses" (p. 460). Although I agree with Squires's description of the Civil Rights Movement as an exemplar of the counterpublic black public sphere, I argue that its roots stretch back a bit farther, to the turn-of-the-20th-century Black press. Journalists such as Ida B. Wells moved back and forth between the enclave and the counterpublic to campaign against lynching. In this manner, prominent black journalists who worked for black advocacy press in the North, such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, or the *New York Amsterdam News*, all hoped to carry reports from black witnesses in enclaves to the mainstream to advance change. Similarly, today's black witnesses produce media within the counterpublic paradigm. Many of the frontline cellphone videos that have surfaced to showcase police brutality, for example, have galvanized numerous distant black witnesses to form organizations that endeavor to engage the mainstream, such as Campaign Zero[10] and Black Lives Matter.

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[10] *Campaign Zero*. http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#vision.

The satellite. Squires's final black public sphere type is the satellite, which makes limited attempts to engage with the dominant public sphere. The satellite is often defiant, separatist, and, in some cases, extremist. Squires offers as an example the Nation of Islam. Since its establishment in 1930, the organization has urged blacks to form an independent, self-sustaining state, where reliance upon the government is unnecessary (Akom, 2003). Internally, the Nation of Islam publishes a newspaper titled, *The Final Call*. On the rare occasion that the Nation of Islam ventures into the counterpublic model to challenge the dominant public, it does so with grand displays of racial solidarity, such as the Million Man March in 1995, or with controversial rhetoric through one central voice, such as Louis Farrakhan (Squires, 2002, p. 464).

The paradigm of the satellite is intriguing in that it does not place its members in a position of imagined inferiority. In the counterpublic model Squires argued that, "Even when African Americans use the speech norms and institutions of the dominant white public, white perceptions of racial difference may derail black attempts at negotiation." Black spokespersons may be "considered exceptional and not representative of the skills and character of the masses" (2002, p. 462). For this reason, the counterpublic model bears a paradox in that it simultaneously reinforces and challenges myths of black inferiority. Whereas the black counterpublic comes with its proverbial hat (or bullhorn) in its hand, asking the dominant sphere to make a compromise, the black satellite does not enable the dominant sphere to exert this form of symbolic leverage over its head; to negotiate is to recognize that the dominant public sphere is more powerful. On the other hand, the satellite misses the opportunity to expose its message to more potential

supporters, however, by not engaging publicly. The prolonged satellite model also can be ineffective because it breeds internal bullying and groupthink. If a black witness within the satellite model participates in Black Twitter, for example, does he have to adhere to all of the beliefs of the satellite while engaging publicly, lest the satellite's credibility be threatened? This is an important question, considering the Nation of Islam once silenced Malcolm X from speaking to the press for 90 days after he claimed that the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was a karmic response to centuries of white-on-black violence (Benson, 1974).

Triangulating Theories

In the 1990s, theories of media witnessing involved either a tripartite bundle of accounts by, of and through the media, or a quadripartite matrix that was divided along planes of space and time, where "being there" mattered more than viewing a reproduced copy of the event. Our current political climate requires a new, ethnocentric theory of media witnessing, however, and I have proposed it here. In this chapter, I posited that black witnessing has three characteristics: (1) it assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; (2) it co-opts racialized online spaces to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and (3) it relies on interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency, to engage diverse audiences. These attributes of black witnessing are based on three implicit assumptions that I have not yet discussed in depth. First, when I state that black witnessing is sousveillant in nature, I am implying that this reportage might challenge existing media representations of African Americans or police brutality. Second, when I

claim that black witnessing co-opts racialized spaces to serve as news networks, I am implying that a previous power structure has been disrupted. Lastly, when I claim that black witnessing functions to engage diverse audiences, I am assuming that exposure to mediated stereotypes can have powerful effects on people. In the next chapter, I review literature that explores these concepts further and in other contexts. Specifically, I survey the studies on framing as a strong effects media theory. This will explain how scholars believe news media produce racial stereotypes that impact peoples' attitudes and actions toward African Americans. The next section explores the evolution of power theories, from Marxian philosophies to Critical Race Theory, to elucidate how modern black witnessing disrupted newsroom norms and American race relations, in one fell swoop.

Chapter 2—Race, News Myths & Narratives of Control

"A riot is the language of the unheard. And, what is it that America has failed to hear?"

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.[11]

Wolf Blitzer sat behind a news desk on a poshly appointed CNN set, watching the civil disobedience in West Baltimore come to a violent head on a late April afternoon in 2015. The community had just buried Freddie Gray, who had sustained fatal spinal injuries while in police custody. In the days leading up to Gray's funeral, Black Lives Matter activists had asked the Baltimore Police Department for more information about the cause of his death. Answers were not forthcoming. Frustrations mounted. On the day of Gray's funeral, some citizens began to loot stores and destroy personal property in the city. Blitzer attempted to relay the mélee, in real-time. He said: "This is a picture of a CVS pharmacy, and casually people are just going in there—they're not even running—they're going in there, stealing whatever the hell they want to steal in there, and then they're leaving, and … I don't see any police there. Where are the police?" (Peters, 2015). Just a few hours later, in nearly identical language, CNN's evening news anchor, Don Lemon, asked why the mayor and governor had not called a state of emergency to summon the National Guard to intervene as black youth descended upon Baltimore's tourist district of the Inner Harbor. Both Blitzer and Lemon were pilloried subsequently

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[11] View the entire *60 Minutes* interview (from which this quote is excerpted) here: http://cbsn.ws/1v8eE7y.

by their journalism colleagues for suggesting that law enforcement officers quell violence, rather than instigate it (Ciccariello-Maher, 2015; Craven, 2015; Peters, 2015).

The *Rolling Stone* specifically described the former anchor as "…a man of breathtaking stupidity, who daily belies his catchphrase of 'watching very closely' with a myopia that dwarfs Mr. Magoo's" (Lund, 2015). By focusing on the destruction of buildings, cars, and other material goods, critics said that the underlying causes of the riot, which included police brutality and longstanding disinvestment in Baltimore's poorest and blackest neighborhoods, were ignored (Doggett, 2015; Elkouby, 2015). Many news outlets sensationalized the riots too, journalist Natalie Keyssar claimed in a May 3, 2015 *Medium* blog post, writing that: "For about 23½ hours a day since I've been here, I've seen nothing but peaceful protest…[but] turning on network news in my hotel room, I see the same loops of these brief moments of violence over and over, with the name of the city plastered across images of fire and mayhem."

Keyssar's testimony serves as a springboard to explore the existing scholarship on media framing and its effects—especially in terms of framing race and police brutality. To evaluate how today's news media talk about these issues, however, requires first going back in time to ascertain how black people were framed in the earliest forms of journalism. When the British began to colonize Africa in the 19th century, for example, they created numerous written accounts of their encounters with black people, which appeared in newspapers throughout Europe. As many postcolonial theorists have noted, these writings often cast the African as an exotic "Other," which led to dynamic definitions of blackness. This literature review, therefore, begins by defining framing, and

explaining why this communications theory is appropriate to use in studying the journalism that Black Lives Matter activists produce. Secondly, I explore how racist frames about black people migrated historically from colonizer journals and newspaper editorials, to pervasive popular culture media formats, and into modern-day news media. Thirdly, I survey the journalism studies and media psychology scholarship that explains how news frames can mold unsavory audience perceptions of African Americans. We conclude by reviewing the growing body of literature that examines how mobile-mediated video witnessing can disrupt faulty news frames and/or usurp control from legacy media. Taken together, this literature review will prove essential to building the argument that black witnessing is fueled not only by a smartphone and WIFI, but it may rely also on one's desire to craft a counter-narrative to centuries-old, anti-black images in popular culture and in the news.

Framing, Defined

The earliest communication models in the 1930s proposed that information could be injected into audiences like a "hypodermic needle" or a "magic bullet" (McQuail, 2010, p. 29). These models proved to be overly simplified. More complex explanations emerged in the late 1940s to account for audiences' homogenous networks and their "selective information diets," which reinforced existing attitudes rather than changed them (Scheufele, 1999). George Gerbner & Larry Gross (1976) conducted early studies of television effects to introduce "cultivation theory"—the idea that people who spend a lot of time watching violent TV programs tend to suffer from "Mean World Syndrome," believing that their environs are more dangerous than it actually is. Later media effects

43

theories, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, included "negation models" (McQuail, 2010), which claimed that exposure to media can elicit strong attitudes, opinions, and emotions from viewing audiences. The major concepts of framing, agenda-setting, and priming belong to the "negation models" school of thought. Entman (1993) wrote that framing is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). Agenda-setting theory suggests audiences pay more attention to issues that news media highlight regularly (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In terms of politics, this means that issues that do not make it to the "top of the fold" are unlikely to become debated in the public sphere. Lastly, priming theory argues that news content can, "suggest to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11).

While agenda-setting is about what issues audiences consider important, and priming is about how news content influences citizen evaluations of characters, institutions, and ideas in the news, framing, rather, sets the stage to probe *how* audiences think about issues that are raised in the news. Framing is preoccupied with the imaginary dichotomies that one creates mentally after exposure to media. Additionally, framing studies how news tropes of good versus evil, white versus black, and victim versus criminal emerge. For this reason, this study uses framing as its chief strong effects paradigm, as it most aptly emphasizes the active role that professional journalists and black witnesses have in crafting enduring racial motifs.

44

Framing Blackness

Many post-colonial theorists have described "blackness" as an identity that is

thrust upon people of African descent, rather than an identity that they have selected

autonomously. Frantz Fanon, for example, recounted a time when a white child saw him

and exclaimed, "Look, a Negro! *Maman*, a Negro!…*Maman*, the Negro's going to eat

me." (Fanon, 1952, p. 93). Fanon described the encounter as an out-of-body experience,

in which he did not think of himself as the black "Other," until the child singled out the

identification for him. In that moment, he imagined the child must be conjuring up all

that blackness *means*. He wrote "The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is

wicked, the Negro is ugly…" (Fanon, 1952, p. 93). Similarly, Stuart Hall (1997) wrote

that people racialize "Otherness" by using a set of binary polarities. He theorized:

> There are the rich distinctions which cluster around the supposed link, on the one
> hand, between the white 'races' and intellectual development—refinement,
> learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed
> institutions, formal government and law, and a 'civilized restraint' in their
> emotional, sexual and civil life, all of which are associated with 'Culture'; and on
> the other hand, the link between the black 'races' and whatever is instinctual—
> the open expression of emotion and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of
> 'civilized refinement' in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual,
> and the lack of developed civil institutions… (p. 243).

In addition to these black/white binaries, Michael Omi and Howard Winant

(2014) posited that race is a fluid social formation (rather than a fixed biological fact),

which is "constantly being transformed by political struggle" (p. 15). One of the mediated

battlegrounds for this struggle is television, they wrote, as it tends to "address the lowest

common denominator in order to render programs 'familiar' to an enormous and diverse

audience…" (p. 13).

Framing blackness in popular culture. Several scholars cited below have studied the long history of how African Americans are depicted visually in popular culture. Hall (1997) posited that the visual medium perpetuates racial binaries more powerfully than any other communicative format. He believed that the Europeans' first encounters of Africans during maiden voyages to the continent at the end of the nineteenth century were marked by an explosion in imperialist iconography. He explained "The progress of the great white explorer—adventures and the encounters with the black African exotic was charted, recorded and depicted in maps and drawings, etchings and (especially) the new photography, in newspaper illustrations and accounts, diaries, travel writing, learned treatises, official reports and 'boys-own' adventure novels… forging the link between Empire and the domestic imagination" (Hall, 1997, p. 240).

American depictions of blackness in visual form, throughout history, have been nearly analogous to the imperialist British semiotics that Hall described. Michele Wallace (2004) has divided the genres of these images as either pre-cinematic or post-cinematic. Pre-cinematic media include "blackface minstrelsy, variety shows, vaudeville, burlesque, and circuses that display genres such as freak shows, human exhibitions, natural history museums, colonial expositions and ethnographic museums; narrative genres, such as melodrama, gothic horror, farce; and pictorial genres such as Orientalism, primitivism or film noir, caricature, slapstick, and animated cartoons" (p. 267). Post-cinematic media include silent films, "talkies," and the modern moving images we now see on the big and small screens (p. 267). Many of these genres have perpetuated racist views of blackness.

Wallace (2004) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) cited the subservient Mammy, the Angry Black Woman, and the lascivious Jezebel as the oldest, yet most enduring popular culture frames for African American women. Collins (2000) wrote extensively about the Welfare Mother also, who breeds black children uncontrollably and burdens taxpayers to care for them. Dionne Stephens and Layli Phillips (2003) argued that the global rise of hip hop ushered in eight more frames, which include: the materialistic Diva; the "sex-for-sale" Gold Digger; the hyper sexual Freak (who would make Jezebel blush!); the Dyke who undermines male sexual control; the Gangster Bitch who robs and steals to survive; the holier-than-thou Sister Savior; the Afrocentric Earth Mother; and the irresponsible Baby Mama. Stephens and Phillips concluded that these tropes affect "how an individual thinks about herself, how she relates to others, and how others think and relate to her" (2003, p. 5). Donald Bogle (1991) wrote about popular culture's unsavory stereotypes of black men as equally problematic. He identified the grinning, simple-minded Coon, the savage Buck, and the servile Uncle Tom as persistent stock characters in film and television. These archetypes evoke pity or fear of the black man, Bogle said.

Framing blackness in the news. Journalism enjoys an air of veracity that few other mediated platforms can match. Its format suggests an objective, value-free transmission of information. Scholars have found, however, that the news never has been neutral or objective about race (Schudson, 2001; Tuchman, 1972). Instead, it has been influenced always by the dominant racial myths of its day. Teun A. van Dijk (2013) explained in *News as Discourse* "Ideologically news implicitly promotes the dominant beliefs and opinions of elite groups in society" (p. 83). He adds that news formats suggest

47

unbiased factuality by formulating meanings, "in such a way that they are not merely understood but also accepted as the truth or at least as a possible truth" (p. 83). Three strategies work in tandem to make news appear neutral, van Dijk surmised: (1) emphasizing the factual nature of events via eyewitnesses, reliable sources and statistics; (2) building a strong relational structure for facts, such as using tried-and-true narrative frames that audiences can follow easily; and (3) providing information that stirs strong attitudes or emotions, which makes the news more memorable (2013, pp. 84-85). In *Racism and the Press*, van Dijk (2015) tested these theories in a textual analysis of European newspapers. He found racism reproduced prevalently in headlines, which set the ideological tone for a piece:

> Headlines about ethnic affairs, therefore, are essential in the definition of ethnic events. We have seen that, especially in the right-wing Press, this definition is seldom positive, occasionally neutral, and often negative. This is most obviously the case for the 'riots', represented by many hundreds of sometimes blatantly negative headlines, in which the urban disturbances are variously associated, not only with violence, but with the most heinous crimes of irrational 'rampaging mobs', mostly consisting of black youths. The lexical style of these headlines is accordingly dramatic and aggressive" (p. 69).

This description of loaded ethnic headlines, which simultaneously sensationalize and demonize black civil disobedience, mirrors what journalist Natalie Keyssar said about cable news looping images of fire and mayhem in Freddie Gray's Baltimore, while largely ignoring or underreporting the peaceful protests that occurred there. Jennifer Heusel (2015) argued that using inflammatory language to report on black protests is a discursive tool that elite media use to delegitimize black political demands. She explained that "marking a race-conscious protest as a race riot [is a] normal expression of traditional racial hierarchy in the US. Such hierarchy maintains whiteness as invisible and

always innocent, and blackness as highly visible and criminal" (p. 196). Scholars similarly have found that news media achieve the visual parallel of this process—of selecting images that relegate black personhood and political concerns—by presenting three tandem falsehoods as self-evident truths: the myth of black criminality, the myth of black marginality, and the myth of post-racialism.

   The myth of black criminality. Paul Gilroy (2008 [1982]) explained in his essay, *The Myth of Black Criminality*, that as the United States' Civil Rights Movement began to wind down in 1968, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the rest of the Western world began to question whether immigration and integration were worthy experiments after all. Particularly in Great Britain, the conservative Member of Parliament Enoch Powell urged the UK government to police people of color more carefully, lest, he said, "In this country in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man" (quoted in Stratton, 2014, p. 5). Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech described a dystopia where whites are overcrowded by uncouth, foul-smelling "Negroes" and their "wide-grinning piccaninnies" (Powell, 1968). The media coverage that the "Blood" speech garnered discouraged further anti-police brutality legislation and birthed the myth of black criminality, Gilroy explained in 1982:

> Indeed the recent history of 'law and order' is scarcely separable from the growth of popular racism and nationalism in the period following Enoch Powell's famous intervention. Powell's wide-grinning piccaninnies have grown up, and with the onset of their adulthood, potent imagery of youthful black criminals stalking derelict inner-city streets where the law-abiding are afraid to walk after sunset has been fundamental to the popularization of increasingly repressive criminal justice and welfare state policies (p. 47).

Gilroy concluded: "The disorder signified in popular imagery of crime and criminals, to which law and order is presented as the only antidote, has become expressive of national

49

decline in several ways…. Race is, however, always dominant in the way this decline is represented" (1982, p. 48). Several journalism studies have assessed how this theory functions in televised news. In the period he studied, which was 1992–1994, Robert Entman found that African Americans were featured most commonly in crime news stories at both the local (Entman, 1992) and national (Entman, 1994) levels. Specifically in Chicago, when journalists decided to include the names of suspects, whites were identified 72 percent of the time, but blacks were named only 28 percent of the time (Entman, 1994). Entman concluded that namelessness dehumanizes black suspects.

Theodore Chiricos and Sarah Eschholz (2002) reported that blacks and Latinos are four times more likely to be portrayed as suspects than as victims of crime in local Orlando television news, while whites are portrayed evenly. Travis L. Dixon and Daniel Linz (2000a) reported similar results in their survey of local Los Angeles television news, in that whites were more likely than African Americans and Latinos to be portrayed as victims. News reports also overrepresented African Americans as perpetrators of homicide, and underrepresented Latinos and whites as perpetrators of this crime (Dixon & Linz, 2000b).

Paula M. Poindexter, Laura Smith and Don Heider (2003) conducted a more longitudinal study of how race and ethnic groups were portrayed in local TV news, from the late 1980s to 1998. The team researched 26 stations across 12 cities. They claimed that while Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans were seldom the subjects of television news reports, African Americans "were more likely to be newsworthy because they had committed a crime" (p. 533). Sixty-nine percent of the news stories that featured black

50

people as the main subjects were about crime, whereas only 28 percent of the news

stories that featured white people as the primary subjects were about crime.

     The myth of black marginality. Christopher P. Campbell's 1995 studies of local

television news reported that the news media regard African American life through either

positive or negative stereotypes. He criticized pieces that feature black people as savage

criminals as purveying "negative" stereotypes (p. 69). Campbell claimed, "The newscasts

viewed for this study were pervaded with threatening images of minority crime suspects

—many shown in police mug shots, others bound in handcuffs closely guarded by police.

Considering the general dearth of minority coverage on the evening news, these may be

the most dominant images of nonwhite Americans" (p. 69). The portrayal of African

Americans on the news at two opposite extremes—as either positive entertainers or

athletes, or as negative criminals—leaves out a large population of black people who are

somewhere in the middle, living ordinary lives. Campbell (1995) argued that the human

interest stories that would normally feature such people are not granted to African

Americans regularly on television news. Instead, he wrote, "the paucity of coverage of

minorities and minority life contributes to a myth of marginalization—people of color

exist at the periphery of mainstream society and do not merit the attention granted to

whites" (p. 57). Clint C. Wilson and Felix Gutierrez (1985) said that this inclusion of

people of color only to discuss hot-button issues, such as immigration or social welfare,

serves to frame minorities as "problem people," who are "projected as people who either

have problems or cause problems for society. The legacy of news exclusion thus leads to

the majority audience seeing minorities as a social burden" (p. 139).

Campbell suggested that diversity in the newsroom could help correct the myth of marginalization, since people of color might propose stories that simultaneously elucidate universal truths and highlight varied worldviews. At the time of his study in 1995, only 4 percent of local television news directors were people of color, and whites held 92 percent of the supervisory jobs that usually lead to those positions, such as assistant news director, assignment editor or executive producer (p. 38). Twenty years later, in 2015, Joshunda Sanders bemoaned the lack of newsroom diversity. She wrote: "The number of black journalists in traditional media dropped 40 percent since 1997 in a profession that had in its ranks a little more than 36,000 employees by the 2013 count of the American Society of News Editors…. And a 2012 RTNDA diversity study reported that 86 percent of television news directors and 91.3 percent of radio news directors are Caucasian" (Sanders, 2015, p. 134). Sanders called these statistics "startling" in the face of US demographics, which project that the nation will comprise people from minority ethnic groups by 2043 (p. 134).

The myth of post-racialism. Post-racial America is a mythical place where all of the old markers of segregation have fallen away to forge a promised land of equal opportunity. Helen Neville, M. Nikki Coleman, Jameca Woody Falconer, & Deadre Holmes (2005) explained: "Social scientists argue that a color-blind racial framework is a contemporary set of beliefs that serves to minimize, ignore, and/or distort the existence of race and racism; at its core is the belief that racism is a thing of the past and that race and racism do not play an important role in current social and economic realities" (p. 29). The veneer of post-racialism is exposed and challenged most when journalists either (1) use

52

naively optimistic news frames that gloss over lingering racial tensions, or (2) apply linguistic or visual double-standards in their reportage of ethnic minorities. To the first point, Campbell (1995) has noted that local news outlets' portrayals of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the early 1980s largely ignored lingering hostilities toward the federal recognition of this holiday and pushed forward, instead, tales of racial harmonies. More recently, news audiences viewed these same tropes in the headlines that announced Pres. Barack Obama's historic win as America's first black Commander-in-Chief in 2008 and 2012. He was "The Dream Realized" for hundreds of newspapers and newscasters who parroted the pronouncement that racism was officially over (LeDuff, 2012).

To the second point, the myth of post-racialism evaporates for media-savvy audiences who detect racialized double standards in reportage. For example, early Hurricane Katrina coverage in August 2005 claimed that blacks were "looting" stores for food (Figure 6), while whites were "finding" provisions for their families (Campbell, LeDuff, Jenkins & Brown, 2012). Moreover, news anchors described the forced black migrants as Katrina "refugees" within their own country, while whites were regarded as "evacuees" (Garfield, 2007; Pesca; 2005). Such nuances in language were not a matter of mere personal preference. The connotations of choosing one word over another during the Katrina aftermath spoke volumes about a journalist's potential view of the story's subject—as either a criminal or a victim; as invading marauders to be shut out or displaced victims to be welcomed.

Dickerson (2004) explained that this is the nature of prejudice in the allegedly post-racial paradigm:

> "Having collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions, an articulated white supremacy—whites-only signs, restrictive covenants, overt police brutality—is no more. But structuralized greed, entrenched greed, and xenophobia, on the other hand, are alive, well, and mutating athletically to retard each new inroad that blacks make into skin or class privilege. If you can't keep something but you can't give it up, you have to render it unrecognizable; racism has been defined out of existence and repackaged so that whites could retain its perks, especially the psychological ones" (p. 53).

Dickerson added that: "whites divert black complaint to the question of whether white approval of the complaint itself will be bestowed. Needless to say, if the complaint doesn't involve German shepherds or fire hoses, if the complainant isn't a saint, racism is unlikely to be considered the culprit….Thus black complaint becomes a subject-changing round robin of white criticism of blacks" (p. 58). We observe anecdotal evidence of Dickerson's claims most commonly, perhaps, when journalists engage in victim-blaming that is packaged as the presentation of objective facts: Trayvon Martin wore a hoodie at night; Eric Garner sold illegal cigarettes; Michael Brown robbed a convenience store; Freddie Gray was a petty thief; and Walter Scott was high on cocaine when a white officer shot him in the back and planted a Taser on his dead body. This, in short, is the politics of post-racial respectability: "the notion that minorities can best respond to structural racism by individually behaving in a 'respectable' manner that elicits the esteem of Whites as a way to insulate the self from attack while also promoting a positive group image that can 'uplift' the reputation of the group" (Obasogie & Newman, 2016, p. 543). In other words, if all of these black men were not in the process of committing crimes when police approached them, then the officers would not have killed them.

How does one explain, then, the fact that *armed* white men—especially mass murderers—recently have survived high-profile encounters with police, while many unarmed black men have not? For example, police escorted Dylann Roof—the white man who shot nine black people in a Charleston, South Carolina church on June 17, 2015 during their weeknight bible study—from the crime scene wearing a bulletproof vest, and later took him to Burger King for a meal (Sumlin, 2015). Similarly, James Holmes, a white man who shot 12 people dead and injured 70 more in an Aurora, Colorado movie theater in 2012, lived to stand trial in 2015 (Healy & Turkewitz, 2015). Jaclyn V. Schildkraut (2014) said that news media overwhelmingly framed Holmes favorably, as the "PhD student in a prestigious neuroscience program" who was "kind of quirky, just the way you expect smart people to be," "a bright but quiet and enigmatic student" and "a brilliant person that could've done a lot of good" (p. 169).

Nancy A. Heitzeg (2015) argued that such framing of white violent offenders, as the good guy gone bad, is normative. When whites commit heinous acts of violence, it is presented as divergent, while black violence is presumed inherent—even if the victim is black, she explained:

> There have been more mass shootings by white perpetrators, including Adam Lanza who killed his mother, twenty children and six adult staff members at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut, and then himself (Follman et al., 2013). And more criminalization of Blackness, including that of Trayvon Martin, who, even as a victim, was demonized in death, and, in effect, put on trial for his very own murder (Heitzeg, 2013).

> This is an old story too, one told and retold in various versions since the end of Reconstruction. It is a story of a white racial frame that largely denies white criminality, and defines it when it must as an 'aberration' while often relying on the medical model for definition and control. **It is a story too of how this is made possible by the persistent attribution of crime to Blackness, the complicity of media in the framing of crime and criminals** [*emphasis mine*], and the reliance on differential sources of social control (p. 198).

Heitzeg's analysis is poignant in light of the fact that "seeing color"—especially in the newsroom—is supposed to be a relic of the 20th century. As I will examine in the next portion of this chapter, however, audiences are affected indeed by exposure to racist news frames still.

The Effects of Exposure

Roland Barthes (1972) called this the "decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*" (p. 11), while John Fiske and John Hartley (1978) referred to this as the development of a "myth chain" (p. 26). Simply put, Patricia Hill Collins (2004) wrote "Mass media's tendency to blur the lines between fact and fiction has important consequences for perceptions of Black culture and Black people" (p. 151). Given an increasingly polarized viewing public, where people select news now that matches their political leanings more than they ever did before (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009), media scholars have begun to question anew what ideas people take away from daily broadcasts—especially in terms of race.

Some studies have shown that it takes only five seconds of exposure to a mug shot of an African American or Latino youth offender in a newscast to raise the level of fear in a viewer, which increases their support for "law-and-order" policing policies (Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon & Wright, 1996). Other studies have found that exposure to news stereotypes can trigger the perception of a facial threat from an unknown stranger (Lubbers, Scheepers & Vergeer, 2000)—especially when that stranger is dark-skinned (Arendt, Steindl & Vitouch, 2015).

Another body of research suggests that racial appeals are becoming ever more sophisticated, relying less on words and more on moving images to convey loaded meanings. Linus Abraham and Osei Appiah (2006) wrote: "[R]acial appeals in American politics now take place through visual imagery, without any explicit or overt reference to race….[N]ews stories make implicit links between Blacks and negative thematic issues and concerns—such as violent crime, drugs, poverty, prisons, drug-addicted babies, AIDS, and welfare—by predominantly juxtaposing or illustrating stories with images of African Americans" (p. 184). Abraham and Appiah called this practice of cognitive association, "implicit visual propositioning." As a form of multi-modal discourse (Norris, 2002), implicit visual propositioning theory states that people file away a single, lasting image in one area of their brain, while attaching numerous verbal or textual meanings to that image in another area. In TV news, this has looked like looping photographs of an unsmiling Trayvon Martin wearing a hooded sweatshirt, instead of airing pictures of the boy grinning with his family. This implicit visual propositioning did not go unnoticed. The hashtags #IfTheyGunnedMeDown and #CrimingWhileWhite emerged from a desire to counter what was being suggested as Martin's inherent criminality (Jackson, 2016; Schiappa, 2015). Youth of all races began to post to social media images of themselves in stereotypical poses that were juxtaposed to wholesome poses, such as smiling graduation pictures, which begged the question, *Which image would the media choose if I was shot by police?* Scholars are pondering this question, of who deserves to be portrayed in the news as a victim, as well. "On the one hand, if media sources overrepresent certain groups (e.g., males, people of color, etc.) as perpetrators, this may promote racial or

gender stereotypes or reinforce public hostility toward such groups….On the other hand, overrepresentation of the victimization of certain groups (e.g., females, Whites, etc.) may promote misleading views of what populations are the most vulnerable to crime, or who should fear crime" (Bjornstrom, Kaufman, Peterson & Slater, 2010). Suffice it to say, the body of literature on the effects of exposure to racist news frames will continue to grow as scholars make a paradigmatic shift from Obama-era post-racialism, into the highly racialized era of Donald Trump—where words like "whitelash" (Blake, 2016) are coined to describe Trump's presidential campaign victory, and the so-called "alt-right," (which was dismissed formerly as a fringe of the Republican Party) rise to power with a peculiar blend of racism, xenophobia, nationalism and "alternative facts" (Kellner, 2016).

The Case for the Counter-narrative

I began this literature review by asserting that framing is the most appropriate theory to use to study the phenomenon of black witnessing. I suggested that frames help us categorize complex concepts into tidy, digestible dichotomies, for better or for worse, in ways that explain them and propose solutions. I then moved to an analysis of the major news myths that have supported anti-black stereotypes, such as black criminality, black marginality, and the ruse of post-racialism. Researchers believe that these myths work in tandem to produce cumulative, cognitive effects in news audiences, some of which are now knee-jerk in nature. The final portion of the literature review involves a growing body of research that examines the relationships between power, video witnessing, and news counter-narratives of race and victimhood. The studies discussed below provide the

epistemological grounding for this dissertation, which probes the lived experiences and intentionality of anti-police brutality activists who engage in black witnessing.

Power and narratives of control. Roni Jackson (2016) asserted: "Historically, most media representations of minorities have presented a one-dimensional portrayal of individuals of color, painting certain races with a very wide brush, eliminating individualism and nuance, and feeding a culture of prejudice. For victims of violence and tragedy, this representation serves to undermine both their person and their victimhood" (p. 318). Does video witnessing serve as a corrective to Jackson's claim? Does filming a human rights atrocity have the *power* to restore one's humanity? Defining the nature of power itself sheds light on these questions. It might be useful to think of theories of power on an "ideology-discourse continuum" (Stoddart, 2007), which ranges from late 19th-century thought to modern-day Critical Race Theories. In this vein, Karl Marx (1848) introduced the earliest theories of power in his seminal text, *The Communist Manifesto*. In it, he argued that power flowed in one direction, from the ruling class (Bourgeoisie) to the working class (Proletariat). Describing the Bourgeoisie control of the Proletariat through wages, Marx wrote:

> The capitalist class is constantly giving to the working class drafts, in the form of money, on a portion of the product produced by the latter and appropriated by the former. The workers give these drafts back just as constantly to the capitalists… The transaction is veiled by the commodity-form of the product and the money-form of the commodity (Marx, 1977, p. 712-713).

Marx believed, therefore, that the working class usurped power from the elites only by altering the economy—especially in terms of the labor market. Although Marx's ideas were celebrated throughout Europe, the working class failed to topple the growing forces of capitalism in his lifetime. Philosophers from the Frankfurt School thus

attempted to generate a more robust theoretical model of power. They were pessimistic about the Proletariats' potential to lead revolutions and posited that resistance must come from the "cultural industry" instead (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Benjamin (1968 [1936]), which broadcasts and inculcates ideological representations of the world to the masses. Antonio Gramsci added to this layer of understanding the media as powerful purveyors of values and ideas with his theories of hegemony. Hegemonic power functions as "common sense" facts that are "inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333). Gramsci believed that dismantling systems of inequality could be achieved if intellectuals and subaltern groups worked together to create counter-hegemonic media messages. Mark C. Stoddart (2007) explained:

> For Gramsci, a revolutionary seizure of the means of production is not a viable tactic for creating radical social change in modern capitalist societies. Where a society is characterized primarily by the exercise of hegemonic power instead of coercion, a prolonged cultural war of position is more important, where the hegemony of the ruling classes is dissembled and a new hegemony is crystallized. This occurs as subaltern groups realize their own capacity to become philosophers of their daily experience; they come to understand the hegemonic common sense that they otherwise take for granted (p. 202).

It is here, in realizing that narratives are tools of control that schools of thought on power begin to diverge significantly. Michel Foucault's post-Marxist writings asserted that power does not flow unidirectionally, from the elites to the working class, in strictly economic terms. Foucault argued that power operates at diffuse nodes in modern society —through science, schools, prisons, and government too. Foucault theorized that resistance, then, occurred through examining micro-social tensions between varying groups. He wrote: "If we speak of the power of laws, institutions, and ideologies, if we speak of structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain

persons exercise power over others. The term 'power' designates relationships between 'partners'" (Foucault 2000 [1994]; p. 337).

Foucault believed that actual discourse—not merely ideology—amasses social power. Stoddart (2007) explained, "The regulation of discourse deals with who is allowed to speak on a given topic, as well as which forms of knowledge are subjugated in the production of truth" (p. 205). In Foucault's own words, he notes, "The delicate mechanisms of power cannot function unless knowledge, or rather knowledge apparatuses, are formed, organized, and put into circulation, and those apparatuses are not ideological trimmings or edifices" (2003, pp. 33-34).

The other theories of power important here are intersectional (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991) in nature and fall under the Critical Race Theory paradigm. Whereas the definition of power for Marx lies in economic relations; for the Frankfurt School, ideology; for Gramsci, hegemony; and for Foucault, discourse, the nexus of power for many Critical Race Theorists is at the crossroads of gender, race, and class. This is not to say that Critical Race Theorists eschew all earlier thinking of power structures. Frantz Fanon, for example (whom I have introduced earlier in this chapter), analyzes colonialism in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) with a Gramscian sensibility, suggesting that intellectuals and marginalized populations work together to create sites of counter-hegemony during times of resistance. Stoddart explained also that Stuart Hall explored a Marxist approaches to race in his essay, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance." Stoddart wrote: "[Hall] describes…racism [is] rooted in economic structure. Here, racial inequality is a cultural reflection of the economic base of society. Racializing ideologies work to justify a system of economic inequality that is beneficial

for capital, in terms of providing a supply of cheap, disposable labor" (2007, p. 215). It

may serve us better to think of Critical Race Theory, then, as a series of postulations on

power that highlights inequalities in economic institutions, political arenas, and in media

simultaneously, since narratives of white supremacy are deeply entrenched in all of these

major sectors of life. bell hooks (2014b) explained:

> Certainly in the space of popular media culture black people in the U.S. and
> black people globally often look at ourselves through images, through eyes that
> are unable to truly recognize us, so that we are not represented as ourselves but
> seen through the lens of the oppressor, or of the radicalized rebel who has broken
> ideologically from the oppressor group but still envisions the colonized through
> biases and stereotypes not yet understood or relinquished (p. 155).

While looking at oneself through abhorrent, mediated frames could be

disempowering, hooks argued that looking back at the oppressor is a site of rebellion and

potential power:

> As fantastic as it may seem, racist white people find it easy to imagine that black
> people cannot see them if within their desire they do not want to be seen by the
> dark Other….An effective strategy of white supremacist terror and
> dehumanization during slavery centered around white control of the black gaze.
> Black slaves, and later manumitted servants, could be brutally punished for
> looking, for appearing to observe the whites they were serving, as only a subject
> can observe, or see. To be fully an object then was to lack the capacity to see or
> recognize reality (2014a, p. 168).

The rise of sousveillance. The description by hooks of power-in-looking proves

an intriguing theoretical frame for this study. We could hypothesize that black witnesses

have assumed this "oppositional gaze," (2014a, p. 116) to establish a degree of narrative

power over how African Americans are portrayed in the media—especially when human

rights violations are in question. Does this power draw its strength from *above*, however,

in that marginalized groups suddenly become the all-seeing eye on high, hacking signals

from security cameras and other surveillance devices? Studies suggest otherwise. Rather,

the black gaze draws its strength from *below*. In a technologically mediated model of

power, which Steve Mann and Joseph Ferenbok have called *sous*veillance, smartphones and wearable technology devices afford African Americans, and other potentially marginalized people, the power to elevate themselves from object to subject. Mann and Ferenbok (2013) channeled Foucauldian theories of power when describing how sousveillance functions:

> Foucault's panopticon is a power metaphor for the distribution of institutional power that works through the fear of being watched…A panoptic system is based on asymmetric gazing between guards and prisoners—agents of the institution generally write, maintain, store and interpret the record or identity, and the subject of the gaze, from whom the system is generally kept opaque. So, the guards (metaphorical authoritarians), use their ability to 'see-but-not-be-seen' to observe and discipline people. This model suggests that we as citizens generally observe the rules of the authority in power because we fear repercussions: the punishment…We are entering an age where people can and will not only look back, but in doing so potentially drive social and political change (pp. 23-24).

Hans Toch (2012) suggested that this change will come about as a result of great displays of political theater, and even likened sousveillant cop-watchers to Greek choruses. He wrote:

> The involvement of spectators in police–citizen confrontations invites comparison with the role played by the chorus in classic Greek tragedies. The chorus has been called the moral barometer of the play in classical Greek theatre because chorus members constantly offered opinions on wickedness, punishment, and righteousness'.

Ben Brucato (2015) indeed offered evidence of smartphone-toting protestors behaving like Greek choruses during the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, stating "Their use of video streaming apps to live-broadcast such events—while chanting "The whole world is watching!"—showed how protesters framed watching as intercession" (p. 1). Additionally, a team of researchers reported in 2013 "A variety of practices were uncovered that link YouTube and Twitter together, including sharing cell phone footage as eyewitness accounts of protest (and police) activity, digging up news footage or movie

63

clips posted months and sometimes years before the movement began; and the sharing of

music videos and other entertainment content in the interest of promoting solidarity or

sociability among publics created through shared hashtags" (Thorson, Driscoll, Ekdale,

Edgerly, et. al, 2013).

Likewise, scholars have marveled at how citizens in Tunisia and Egypt practiced

sousveillance in 2011's so-called "Arab Spring" revolts to circumvent traditional media

outlets, which were run by oppressive political regimes, to publish video directly to

Twitter (Howard, Duffy, Freelon, Hussain, & Mari, 2011; Khondker, 2011; Lotan, Graeff,

Ananny, Gaffney, & Pearce, 2011). Those who put themselves in harm's way to

document political unrest in their countries were heralded as "mediated

martyrs" (Halverson, Ruston, & Trethewey, 2013) who dared to "overthrow the protest

paradigm" (Harlow & Johnson, 2011). Although the Arab Spring and the Occupy

movements declined by 2013, the Black Lives Matter Movement had only just begun

with the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer, George Zimmerman, on July 13. The *New

Yorker* published a piece entitled, "After the Verdict: The Zimmerman Non-Riots," in

which Jelani Cobb skewered the expectation for black mob violence and reminded

readers that whites riot too. He wrote (2013):

> This country has a long history of lynchings, but not one in which non-black
> defendants needed to fear the fury of black mobs. Amplifying the irony is the fact
> that the verdict was announced on July 13, 2013—the hundred-and-fiftieth
> anniversary of the Civil War draft riots in New York City, in which white mobs
> pursued and killed blacks on the streets and burned a black orphanage to the
> ground. America's past is populated with similar rioters, driven by a desire to
> eliminate black voting, to discipline purported black criminals en masse, to veto
> school integration at the grassroots level.

Cobb added, "We scarcely discuss them and would like to believe that they have no bearing upon the present." This widespread disremembering of incessant white violence and the perpetual framing of black criminality as inherent seemingly stirred a mobile-mediated generation to bear witness in Ferguson, and beyond. Existing power structures —between the police and the policed, and vis-à-vis news media and African American people—have been disrupted in the process.

Sousveillant, mobile-mediated black witnessing fills a cultural information gap that declining sites of black discourse have left behind. Corporate consolidation of the world's airwaves has led to the promotion of gangster rap as the prevailing sub-genre of Hip-hop. As political rapper Chuck D once called conscious hip hop, black America's informal news network, this leaves very few mass communication channels through which African Americans can rely to get their news. *JET* magazine—which bore witness to the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 by publishing pictures of his mutilated body on its pages—ceased its print operations in 2014 and lives online only now. *Ebony* magazine's leadership sold the publication to a private equity Texas firm in June 2016. Many storied black newspapers are running only digital archives of issues past on outdated websites. For all of these reasons, the rise of Black Twitter—and all of its witnesses—makes sense. Black witnesses—both frontline and distant—are helping America question anew how our current political climate empowers or silences vulnerable voices. As Patricia Hill Collins (2013) wrote "Challenging power structures from the inside, working the cracks within the system, however, requires learning to speak multiple languages of power convincingly" (p. xiii). Indeed, today's black witnesses seemingly have learned to do so.

The activists you will meet in the forthcoming chapters speak the "languages" of tweets, texts, videos and virality fluently. They form the vanguard of a new brand of protest "#journalism," which documents the Black Lives Matter Movement in real-time. Their news frames often provide vibrant counter-narratives to legacy media's depictions of blackness, black people, and black social movements. And their testimonies as empowered sousveillers offer dynamic case studies to explore Foucauldian theories of discursive power within the Critical Race Theory paradigm.

Chapter 3—Mining for the Media Makers

"…I am not only a casualty, I am also a warrior."

—Audre Lorde[12]

This dissertation investigates specifically how leading anti-police brutality activists—especially those affiliated with the Black Lives Matter Movement—use mobile and social media to report original news within the contemporary social justice "beat." This chapter describes the research methods I used for this study. I outline the core research questions, explain how I recruited participants, and describe the mixed-methods research design, which melded semistructured interviews and a descriptive analysis of the activists' Twitter timelines.

Research Questions

This study investigates the extent to which the concept of black witnessing, as described in Ch. 1, might explain how anti-police brutality activists produce and share news about the Black Lives Matter Movement. The study is organized around three more specific questions:

RQ1:   What is the lived experience of bearing witness while black?

RQ2:   How do anti-police brutality activists use mobile devices to engage in sustained acts of black witnessing?

RQ3:   How do anti-police brutality activists use Twitter as an *ad-hoc* news outlet to create and circulate protest journalism?

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[12] Lorde, A. (1977). The transformation of silence into language and action. *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*, 81-84. New York, NY: Crossing Press.

Methods

This study consisted of two methods: semi-structured interviews and a descriptive analysis of the activists' Twitter timelines (Table 1). This mixed-methods approach to investigating the phenomenology of black witnessing via Twitter followed in the procedural footsteps of several pioneering scholars of Black Twitter (Brock, 2012; Clark, 2014; Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016; Sharma, 2013). The interviews helped me explore why the activists chose to bear witness in sustained ways, and how they felt their reportage helped their audience make sense of police brutality against black people. The descriptive analyses of the activists' Twitter timelines provided insight into how they used mobile and social media to create and share Movement-related news.

Table 1—Research Questions, Methods, and Types of Data

Research Question	Method	Data Type
RQ1: What is the lived experience of bearing witness while black?	Semi-structured Interview	Coding interviews for themes of phenomenology and reality construction
	Descriptive analysis	Coding activists' Twitter timelines with genre-based metrics
RQ2: How do anti-police brutality activists use mobile devices to engage in sustained acts of black witnessing?	Semi-structured Interview	Participant descriptions of the mobile device "workflow"
	Descriptive analysis	Ratio of mobile-to-Web posts to Twitter
RQ3: How do anti-police brutality activists use Twitter as an *ad-hoc* news outlet to create and circulate protest journalism?	Semi-structured Interview	Participant descriptions of Twitter's role in creating and sharing BLM news
	Descriptive analysis	Coding activists' Twitter timelines with user and temporal metrics

Selection of Participants

CNN produced in August 2015 a list of 13 "Disruptors" who rose to national prominence in the year after the Ferguson uprisings (Table 2). This list was the foundation for developing a larger snowball sample of potential study participants. It should be noted that only three of the CNN Disruptors are members of the *organization*, Black Lives Matter. The other ten leaders have tweeted using the #BlackLivesMatter blacktag and thus are affiliated with the collective Movement. This coalition is akin to the relationship that groups such as Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) forged to create what scholars now call the Civil Rights Movement (Wirmark, 1974).

Table 2—The CNN Disruptors

Activist	Organization	Twitter Handle
Alicia Garza	Black Lives Matter	@aliciagarza
Ashley Yates	Millennial Activists United	@brownblaze
Brittany Packnett	Campaign Zero	@MsPackyetti
Charlene Carruthers	Black Youth Project 100	@CharleneCac
DeRay Mckesson	We the Protestors	@deray
Erika Totten	Black Lives Matter	@2LiveUnchained
Johnetta Elzie	Campaign Zero	@Nettaaaaaaaa
Kayla Reed	Organization for Black Struggle	@RE_invent_ED
Michelle Taylor	#YouOkSis	@FeministaJones
Opal Tometi	Black Lives Matter	@opalayo
Patrisse Cullors	Black Lives Matter	@osope
Shaun King	Justice Together	@ShaunKing
Umi Selah	Dream Defenders	@Umiselah

Benefits of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a non-probability technique that leverages *a priori* knowledge of a small group of potential study subjects to cultivate a larger pool of study participants that may have remained hidden, if not for a referral from the original study subjects. Snowball sampling can be leveraged to gain access to (and trust from) anti-establishment actors, such as activists, who may be suspicious of legacy media or academic researchers initially (Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Jun, 2013). Methodology scholars have noted also that participants selected through the snowball method are less likely to offer socially acceptable answers that the researcher may want to hear (Noy, 2008; Rauch, 2007). The referral from a trusted colleague endorses the interviewer, creates a safe space for participation, and allows the subjects to discuss topics that may be socially taboo or politically divisive (Gallagher, 2003).

In terms of Twitter studies, snowball sampling is used regularly to help researchers delimit large data sets (Gerlitz & Rieder, 2013; Hogan, 2008); to investigate cultural phenomena (Garcia-Gavilanes, Quercia, & Jaimes, 2013; Liu, 2013); to study topic- or activity-based user groups (Paßmann, Boeschoten, & Schäfer, 2014); or to observe the dissemination of content throughout a network (Krishnamurthy, Gill, & Arlitt, 2008). When employed as a method in journalism studies, snowball sampling has been used to study several topics that are germane to this dissertation, which include video activism as a form of sousveillance (Wilson & Serisier, 2010); the role of activists as interpretive communities for professional journalists (Rauch, 2007); and the impact of the Internet and mobile phones on legacy news media (Bivens, 2008).

Limitations of snowball sampling. Selection bias is the chief limitation of snowball sampling as a research method for recruiting participants. In probability based-experiments, the emphasis on curating a random sample size that is large enough to glean representative data is related directly to the goal of presenting reproducible results. Disregard for selection bias can render scientific findings inaccurate or merely descriptive of a one-time event. Media scholars have asserted that the goal of reaching marginalized communities—especially in digital spaces—necessitates a circumvention of normative recruiting methods sometimes. Fabiola Baltar and Ignasi Brunet (2012) wrote:

> In the ambit of social research, the use of new technologies is still questioned because the selection bias is an obstacle to carry on scientific research on the Internet. In this regard…the use of social networking sites (Web 2.0) can be effective for the study of "hard-to-reach" populations. The main advantages of this technique are that it can expand the geographical scope and facilitates the identification of individuals with barriers to access. Therefore, the use of virtual networks in non-probabilistic samples can increase the sample size and its representativeness (2012, p. 57).

Overcoming selection bias. Foregoing the time-honored probabilistic approach to participant recruitment, in favor of unearthing new data and new voices, is supported by many media studies scholars—with the caveat that the researcher takes several measures to overcome additional biases or blind spots. First, investigators must be mindful not to compound the aforementioned issues by over-emphasizing a single social media platform or hashtag merely because its data are more readily available. Zeynep Tufekci (2014) wrote that most people "alternate between Facebook, Twitter, broadcast media, cell-phone conversations, texting, face-to-face and other methods of interaction and information sharing" (p. 5). In this study, I justify the use of analyzing only Twitter since the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag gained prominence on this social media platform.

After all, Alicia Garza's initial "love letter" that she wrote to African Americans (in the wake of the Trayvon Martin murder trial verdict) was posted to Facebook first with the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag (Cobb, 2016). It was only after she reposted her missive to Twitter that it rose to prominence. Focusing on Twitter only in this study, therefore, mirrors Brock's (2012) critical technocultural discourse analysis approach to studying African American participation in digital spaces, in that it assumes a social network's core features and interface directly impact the affordances one has when using it. Additionally, the decision to focus only on Twitter for this study reflects Alfred Hermida's (2010) notion of Twitter as an "ambient" journalism outlet that "points to the hybrid and innovative forms of news production on open, networked platforms, suggesting new paradigms of journalism at play that break with classic narrative structures and deviate from long-held and fiercely defended norms" (p. 297).

The second key to overcoming the selection bias of snowball sampling is to be ever cognizant of the "hidden data" that computational algorithms obscure, or the unseen data that researchers miss, due to faulty assumptions. Scraping Twitter's API for study subjects' complete timelines, for example, can introduce "'alien' analytic assumptions, such as a pre-occupation with freshness… [and] already formatted data" (Marres & Weltevrede, 2013, p. 313). Farida Vis (2013) urged researchers to note the extent to which they were at the mercy of an API's algorithms, and stand prepared to explain "[D]ecisions about what to collect (what is in, what is out), from which API data is collected, for which period, including which metadata, including an awareness of how this collected data is itself." To overcome the unseen data blind spots—which result

typically because researchers have too many preconceived notions about a perspective group of study subjects—Nancy Baym (2013) advocates mixed-methods studies, which do not rely solely on Twitter data to quantify or explain observed phenomena. She wrote in *First Monday*: "The data that matters most for assessing social value may not be measurable at all….They are the stories that come in posts, e–mail messages, and private messages which, from a metadata perspective, look interchangeable with all the other messages in the pool" (p. 1).

Criteria for participant selection. My snowball sample began with the 13 Disruptors that CNN highlighted in 2015. To be included, subjects for this study had to be prominent activists affiliated with the Black Lives Matter Movement who were at least 18 years of age, who maintained an active Twitter account with at least 1,000 followers. All study subjects had to be willing to engage in a videotaped interview—in-person or via Skype or Google Hangout—of up to 90 minutes long. At the end of the interviews, I asked each participant to recommend at least three additional people I should contact.

I contacted all 13 activists via Twitter initially, either through direct message (if they authorized this feature), or on their public walls. Two of the 13 original interview prospects granted me interviews. Nine of the 13 declined my requests for interviews, yet referred me to an ally in the Movement who was still "doing press." (I later found out that the activists have developed a sophisticated, alternating method of talking to academic researchers and professional journalists to avoid burnout.) The final two Disruptors never responded to me at all, despite three Twitter direct messages and three emails. I only contacted potential subjects three times on either medium, unless they told me to submit

my interview request via Facebook, so that they could verify my identity. Initially, I had hoped that I would make contact with all 13 Disruptors who would each recommend three more people, for a total of 39 potential interviewees. The influencers in the Movement are tightly knit, however, and similar names began to overlap by the fifth interview. In summary, the two Disruptors I was able to reach recommended five discrete, affiliated activists. Those five activists recommended 18 more discrete allies, for a total of 25 potential interviewees. I eliminated five potential activists, based on my selection criteria. One person was younger than 18 years of age. Two potential participants did not have an active Twitter account. The last prospect did not have a minimum of 1,000 followers. I decided against including this person anyway because I believed doing so might usher in claims of selection bias.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 participants between October 2016 and February 2017. I used 15 interviews for this analysis (eight men and seven women). I did not use five interviews for three different reasons. Two activists would not answer the questions for this study. Instead, they stayed "on message" and "talked about their organization's platforms and ideals in broad terms, and "passed" on more personal questions about their lived experiences. Another activist was willing to conduct an interview initially, but changed her mind after the first few questions, citing emotional distress. The final activist began an interview alone but wanted to loop in others from her organization's chapter via Google Hangout. Unfortunately, this group interview produced very little introspective commentary, since the activists were hesitant to open up in a collective setting. The total corpus comprises 8.42 hours of video footage. The average

interview duration was 68 minutes. I conducted three interviews in person. The remaining 12 interviews took place virtually—via Skype, FaceTime or Google Hangout—according to the participant's preference.

Semi-structured Interviews

I integrated two established philosophies while developing and refining my interview map: phenomenology and Jerome Bruner's functional approach to narrative analysis. Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of the study's subjects by evaluating a subject's: (1) intentionality, (2) intuition, (3) empathy and (4) intersubjectivity (Husserl, 1970). In terms of this study, it meant focusing on: (1) the black witnesses' stated purpose for practicing sustained acts of sousveillance; (2) whether or not they intuited their bearing witness as a form of protest journalism; (3) how they viewed their bodies in relation to the world, (for example, whether they see themselves in the body of a dead black man or woman who has been gunned down by police); and (4) how they believed their individual work as black witnesses impacted the broader Black Lives Matter Movement. While the phenomenological school of thought is more than a century old, many contemporary journalism studies employ this philosophy to frame qualitative interview questions. Edson Tandoc and Bruno Takahashi (2016) studied the lived experiences of journalists-cum-*ad hoc* disaster relief workers who covered a typhoon that hit the Philippines in November 2013; Tim Markham (2011) investigated the normative newsroom practices of war correspondents who work in combat zones; and Michael Arnold (2003) described how the social implications of emergent mobile devices must be considered in terms of one's agency to use that device in ways that may not have

75

been conceived by its manufacturer. Phenomenology allowed me to identify common threads in how Black Lives Matter activists *see* themselves and *situate* themselves as protest journalists who have mobile-mediated agency. This "day-in-the-life" perspective allowed me to cluster themes that emerged from their personal narratives into categories, which described the "'essence' or core commonality" and "structure of the experience" (Starks & Trinidad, 2008, p. 1373).

  A functional approach to narrative analysis. I coded my interviews using Jerome Bruner's (1991) functional approach to narrative analysis. Bruner proposed that narratives are the chief way that people construct their realities and meanings of events. For instance, although the initial claim that Michael Brown had his hands up and screamed, "Don't shoot!" just before a white police officer killed him, proved to be untrue (Capeheart, 2015; Lee, 2015), that narrative arguably compelled distant black witnesses to protest in Ferguson in 2014. Online photo memes of African American NFL football players (NBC Staff, 2014), college students (*Clutch* Staff, 2014), Congresspersons (Larson, 2014), and even media personalities (Marsh, 2015)—all with their hands up in the air—went viral. An eponymous organization, Hands Up United, even sprang up.[13] In this vein, people made meaning of current events through the dominant narratives that circulated at that time. Some narratives continued to stick, even if they were not true, because people needed to shape chaotic events into a coherent story that made it easier to process. Bruner (1991) wrote "[The] domain that must be widely (though roughly) shared for a culture to operate with requisite effectiveness is the domain

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[13] *See*: http://www.handsupunited.org

of social beliefs and procedures—what we think people are like and how they must get on with each other" (p. 21). I believed that part of probing the lived experience of a black witness involved examining also their perceived status in the world and their relationship to others, so I looked for these themes when I analyzed my data. I listened to how they made sense of police brutality and other acts of anti-black racism for themselves (and for others) by telling stories online.

Basic limitations of interviewing. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews are more intimate than a focus group setting, where many people are asked their opinions as a collective. It can be intimidating for some study participants to take part in interviews for this reason: they are sharing their opinions alone with an investigator they may or may not know, and they often do not know how that investigator will report or frame their responses (Myers & Newman, 2007; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966). Methodology scholars also have noted that interviews could be constrained potentially by a subject's lack of trust in the principal investigator or by lack of time to complete an entire interview map for each subject (Myers & Newman, 2006). Likewise, principal investigators could be constrained by their own "elite" biases, which aim to select for participation initially only the stars of an organization (Miles & Guberman, 1994) or to highlight in the final write-up only the most articulate participants (Heiskanen & Newman, 1997). The final obstacles to interviewing involve a principal investigator's failure to remark how his or her presence and personality, or how the wording of one's questions, might influence the participant's answers (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Overcoming basic limitations to interviewing. I acknowledge that my initial selection of *CNN*'s 13 Black Lives Matter Disruptors exhibited elite bias. I approached each of these high-level activists, however, in hopes of employing a robust snowball sample. Contacting these prominent activists indeed led me to active, yet unsung local actors that I may not have found easily. I also attempted to overcome interview bias by listening more than I talked. Nalita James and Hugh Busher (2006) have encouraged researchers to be cognizant of "the authenticity of participants' voices and how that was affected by power and control in the interview process" (p. 403). I tried to make each participant feel at ease—even if I interviewed them remotely.

The interview process. I began each interview by asking the participant to consent to filming. When they answered affirmatively, I opened the QuickTime software on my computer, activated its screencasting feature, then asked the subject to consent to the interview again, this time on-camera. I used an interview map to guide my inquiries (Appendix A), but asked follow-up questions when necessary. When I completed an interview, I uploaded my QuickTime screencast video to the Rev.com website for third-party transcription. The company sent me a Microsoft Word file back within 24 hours, which contained the verbatim transcript. Then, I had a research assistant review the transcript from Rev.com to make any corrections, if necessary. I uploaded the transcripts to MaxQDA software for data analysis, which occurred in three phases. First, I sorted the witnesses into five groups that emerged organically. Then, I read each transcript and looked for recurring narrative themes. Lastly, I created data visualizations of the emergent trends. I offer the results of these analyses in Ch. 4.

Descriptive Analysis of Twitter Timelines

The second phase of this study involved a descriptive analysis of the participant activists' Twitter timelines. I used a Web-based application called Twitter Archiver to curate the participants' public posts. Its code (Appendix B) retrieved data from Twitter's API and the Google Apps script to generate a spreadsheet of a user's recent activity. Twitter Archiver's time-based trigger ran a 'downloadtweets' command every 15 minutes. The application then returned the following metadata about each Twitter post: (1) the date, (2) the user's screen name, (3) the user's full name, (4) the body of the tweet, (5) the tweet's unique identifier, (6) the application that the user deployed to post the tweet, (7) the number of followers that the user has, (8) the number of people that the user follows, (9) how many re-tweets the original post received, (10) how many times the original tweet was "favorited," (11) the age of a Twitter account, (12) the user's location when they posted the tweet (if the geolocation feature was enabled), (13) the user's Twitter biography, and (14) the user's profile picture. Taken together, these metadata allowed me to make inferences into how the activists use mobile devices to facilitate black witnessing, and Twitter to create and share protest journalism.

I started gathering data for the 13 CNN Disruptors in mid-September 2016, at the height of the Terence Crutcher controversy. Crutcher was a 40-year-old black man whom police shot fatally on camera in Tulsa. He appeared to have his hands in the air at the time the Tulsa police fired on him, which stoked fresh rounds of Black Lives Matter protests in Oklahoma and beyond—just as the summer of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile had seemed to be winding down. I programmed Twitter Archiver to run for one month, then

worked actively to schedule interviews with the CNN Disruptors. By mid-October, I had

secured interview commitments with only 2 of the 13 Disruptors. The activists who came

highly recommended via the snowball technique, however, began to express interest in

the project. Still, the Twitter Archiver tool was not robust enough to pull data that was

older than seven days since Twitter's API restricts free historical retrievals. As I met new,

consenting activists for the first time—some months after Crutcher's death—I had a data

gap. I decided, therefore, that my Twitter data corpus would not consist exclusively of

Terence Crutcher-related reportage, gleaned from mid-September to mid-October. I

decided to use a new tool, called Twecoll, to look at the last 3,200 tweets of every

participant. This gave me a more longitudinal view of their Twitter habits and reportage.

Some activists had fewer 3,200 total tweets. In those instances, I was able to see every

tweet they have ever posted (and not deleted) since they joined the social media platform.

This allowed me to observe interesting peaks and valleys of their participation, which I

inquired about explicitly in the semi-structured interviews. Other prolific activists, on the

other hand, tweeted 3,200 posts in just a one-month or two-month span, so their timelines

were dense and rich. These datasets allowed me to make early conjectures about the kinds

of news "beats" the various activists followed or what media formats their reports took on

most often. Altogether, my total corpus contained 34,309 tweets. The tweets ranged in

date from January 2012 to February 2017. I exported datasets for the 15 activists I

interviewed from Twecoll to Tableau and Microsoft Excel. Lastly, I evaluated each tweet

for user-based and temporal metrics in Tableau, and genre-based metrics in Excel, using

the following scheme.

User metrics. User-based Twitter activity metrics offered insight into an activist's "commitment to the hashtagged exchange" and their online engagement with their followers (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013, p. 6). I counted for each user: (1) the total number of tweets sent; (2) the number of original tweets versus retweets; (3) the number of @replies sent, which address users directly, and (4) the number of "favorited" tweets.

Temporal metrics. Whereas user-based activity metrics helped to investigate, "whether hashtags are used mainly for posting original thoughts, for engagement within the community, or for sharing information," a second major group of metrics evaluated the total dataset not by user, but by time (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013, p. 8). Temporal Twitter metrics focused on the discrete timeframe of data gathering to emphasize the bursts and lulls of both group-level and individual activity. For this study, I quantified each user's individual average daily rate of tweeting during the first two months of 2017.

Genre-based metrics. I developed a preliminary coding scheme of the activists' Twitter timelines, to ascertain how they use the platform to create and circulate protest journalism. I adapted Stephen Dann's (2010) model, which includes five categories of content: (1) conversational, (2) pass-along, (3) news, (4) status, and (5) phatic. Traditionally, researchers have used Dann's model to conduct quantitative studies, such as content analyses. Since my descriptive analysis was qualitative, I had to modify his 16 sub-levels to these categories (Table 3), then test my model on one user's timeline. I found that I needed more descriptors. I elevated the "imbroglio" code to its own category, to reflect the varied forms of online conflict. Then, I added 13 descriptive sub-levels. The

revised Twitter timeline coding scheme has six categories and 29 sub-levels (Table 4). This is the scheme I used to perform a descriptive analysis of the corpus.

Conversational metrics. Conversational metrics quantify the number of times that a user addresses another user directly, using the "@ mention" function. This looked like a call-to-action, coalition-building, playing the "dozens," or making an inquiry, promotion, or referral. A call-to-action is an invitation for Twitter followers to mobilize offline, in real life. The coalition-building code refers to two users from different organizations within the broader Black Lives Matter Movement talking to each other. Playing the "dozens" is an African American tradition of verbal wordplay that uses sarcasm and ritual insult to illuminate certain truths (Dollard, 1939; Berdie, 1947). An inquiry is a question or poll that a user poses to his or her followers. A promotion is an advertisement for an event, product or service.

Pass-along metrics. Pass-along metrics included retweets, headlines and referrals. Retweets are any statements that employ the social network's "RT" protocol to cut-and-paste someone else's Twitter post into one's own feed. A headline is a retweet of a legacy news outlet story. A referral is an "@ response" to a user that contains hyperlinks.

News metrics. News metrics included links to activists' original blog posts, videos, pictures, memes or audio podcasts. These took the form of endorsements, location updates, live streams, requiem, sanctions, solutions, and temporal updates. Endorsements are expressions of approval, usually for a policy change. Activists provide location updates to let other users know where an event will take place. Live streams are videos that capture a breaking news event. A requiem is a post that summons public displays of

mourning. Sanctions encourage followers to boycott an institution or business. Proposed solutions are tweets that clarify or summarize Black Lives Matter's public stances on issues. Lastly, temporal updates let followers know when an event will occur.

Status metrics. Status metrics answered the question upon which Twitter was based originally—"What are you doing?—with four subcategories: mechanical, personal, physical, and triumph. Mechanical posts refer to technology, which includes, but is not limited to, smartphones or WIFI connectivity. Personal posts express a positive or negative sentiment in the form of an opinion or an emotional status update. Physical tweets include references to one's bodily state, whether it involves fatigue or physical harm. Tweets that trigger the "triumph" code are updates that share a win for the Black Lives Matter Movement, at either the local or national level.

Phatic metrics. Phatic metrics represented stream-of-consciousness-style Twitter posts. Typically, they were directed to no one in particular. Phatic content could be broadcasts, greetings, maxims, self-affirmations, or statements of self-care and spirituality. A broadcast is a monologue of sorts, which is broken into many parts as a serialized tweet, since Twitter allows a user to publish only 140 characters at a time. These tweets allow the activist to vent a frustration or share an extended opinion. A greeting is a global salutation. Maxims are truisms that the activists share to stay encouraged collectively. Self-affirmations are mantras that activists utter "aloud" to motivate themselves. Activists make statements of self-care either to encourage colleagues to take a break, or to share their relaxation regimens. Spirituality tweets reference God explicitly in public prayers or theological discussions.

Imbroglio metrics. An imbroglio was either an activist's hostile engagement with an individual Twitter troll, or a statement of disdain for a specific group. The most common targets were the so-called "alt-right," Democrats, and real and imagined beneficiaries of white privilege. Imbroglios ensued also when activists believed news stories were reported incorrectly. If they contradicted the reportage, this triggered the fact-checking code.

Basic limitations of Twitter timeline analysis. Twitter timeline analysis answered many questions about how Black Lives Matter activists created and circulated Movement-related news, but it could not claim to know the users' motivations for using the service to achieve these ends, or the values to which they adhered while working. Emirbayer & Goodwin (1994) explained further:

> Network analysis all too often denies in practice the crucial notion that social structure, culture, and human agency presuppose one another; it either neglects or inadequately conceptualizes the crucial dimension of subjective meaning and motivation—including the *normative commitments* of actors—and thereby fails to show exactly how it is that intentional, creative human action serves in part to constitute those very social networks that so powerfully constrain actors in turn (1994, p. 1413).

Overcoming the limitations of network analysis. The "anticategorical imperative" rejects all attempts to explain human behavior merely by finding patterns in a network (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1414). I tried to be wary of "structural determinism," which offers only snapshots of Twitter activity without investigating the causal significance of these symbolic and discursive formations (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1436). Additionally, I avoided "structural instrumentalism," which acknowledges the significance of the modern Black Lives Matter activists' involvement, yet relies too much on assumptions of a history-repeating-itself, cyclical explanation of activists'

motivations to bear witness. I did not assume, for example, that modern protest journalism mirrored that of past activists. Instead I practiced "structuralist constructionism," whereby I "affirm the possibility that actors' goals and aspirations might well be complex, multivalent, and historically determined [and influenced by] such intricate processes as identity conversion, structural channeling of learning, and flexible opportunism" (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1436).

Table 3—Preliminary Genre-based Twitter Metrics

Type of Content	Sub-level	Example Tweet*
Conversational	inquiry	Anyone know if a protest is scheduled in Tulsa?
	referral	@USER check with the local BLM chapter.
	call-to-action	Join us at the gov. mansion.
Pass-along	retweet	RT @USER: Join us for a moment of silence…
	endorsement	Yes to the Gov's response!: https://snapchat.co.
News	headlines	RT @CNN: Thousands gather in Tulsa at noon.
	user-generated content	Current view of the crowd. https://t.co/pic.
Status	personal	I am proud of the turnout here.
	temporal	Waiting for the 12 noon moment of silence.
	location	Protesting in front of the Governor's mansion.
	mechanical	My phone is almost dead, but I'm still here.
	physical	It is so hot out here today. I am burning up.
	work	Almost done making picket signs for activists.
Phatic	greetings	Good night, Black Twitter. I love you.
	broadcast	Holding my son close tonight. #blacklivesmatter
	imbroglio	I'm blocking you. Hate speech is unwelcome.

*Note: All of these Tweets are fictitious and are provided only as exemplars for each category.

Table 4— Revised Genre-based Twitter Metrics

Type of Content	Sub-level	Example Tweet*
Conversational	call-to-action	Join us for a moment of silence at the gov. mansion.
	coalition	BYP just joined us on the gov's lawn.
	dozens	This is biggest block party the gov. has ever hosted.
	inquiry	Anyone know if a protest is scheduled in Tulsa?
	promotion	The BLM mixtape drops on SoundCloud today.
Pass-along	headlines	RT @CNN: Thousands gather in Tulsa at 12 noon.
	referral	@USER check with the Tulsa BLM chapter.
	retweet	RT @USER: Join us for a moment of silence…
News	endorsement	Yes to the gov's response: https://snapchat.co.
	location	Protesting in front of the Governor's mansion.
	live	Current view of the mansion crowd. https://t.co/pic.
	requiem	Mothers are grieving on the lawn, hugging.
	sanctions	Can't come out? Boycott coffee shops today.
	solutions	We need more training for cops. Period.
	temporal	Waiting for the noon moment of silence.
Status	mechanical	My phone is almost dead. I'll try to post once more.
	personal	I am proud of the turnout here.
	physical	It is so hot out here today. I am burning up.
	triumph	A win for BLM! The officer will be indicted.
Phatic	broadcast	I'm going to hold my son a little tighter tonight.
	greetings	Good afternoon, Black Twitter. I love you.
	maxim	The only thing that can kill us is giving up.
	self-affirmation	I am powerful. My life matters.
	self-care	Leaving now. Headed to dinner with friends.
	spirituality	Lord, I thank you for watching over us today.
Imbroglio	anti-alt-right	POTUS called our protest "fake." #dumptrump
	anti-Dems	Sen. Jones didn't show up today. #demsdontcare
	fact-checking	CNN shows cops in riot gear. That pic is from 2014.
	white privilege	Where were the Women's March protestors today?

*Note: All of these Tweets are fictitious and are provided only as exemplars for each category.

Chapter 4—Motivations

"I use my camera as a weapon against all the things I dislike about America—

poverty, racism, discrimination."

—Gordon Parks[14]

Marissa Johnson said Sen. Bernie Sanders supporters never saw her coming. Although organizers of the now-infamous Seattle rally for the Presidential hopeful knew that Johnson was a leader in the local Black Lives Matter chapter, they expected a man to interrupt the rally that day in August 2015, she said. So, she flanked herself with male colleagues—one black and one white—and went forth. As the black, male activist walked to one corner of the stage, "They put all the security over where he was," Johnson said, smiling. With the diversion in place, her white male colleague separated the metal barricades to the platform. In a flash, she walked up the makeshift stairs to the dais. The rest became protest history. A young, black woman had just preempted the Presidential stump speech of a sitting US Senator. Johnson demanded 4½ minutes of silence in memory of Brown, to symbolize the 4½ hours his body lay on a Ferguson street. Some yelled profanities through the moment of silence. As it ended, Johnson began a speech on Seattle's legacy of police brutality. She usurped Sanders's platform for nearly 30 minutes. The clashing imagery of a seemingly frustrated and forlorn Sanders vis-à-vis Johnson's bellicosity looped on television news networks. In one interview she conducted with MSNBC, she seemed assured and proud of her confrontation. Nearly one-and-a-half

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[14] Parks, G. (1966). *A Choice of Weapons*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

years later, however, she said that she has mixed feelings as to whether she would do it again. No one could have prepared her, she said in our February 2017 interview, for the immense personal toll that her activism cost her. As one of the 15 activists I spoke to for this study, Johnson took me beyond the news headlines and into the lived experience of bearing witness while black.

As I explained in Chapter 3, I integrated phenomenology and Bruner's functional approach to narrative analysis when I developed my interview questions. Phenomenology is a mode of inquiry that focuses on the lived experiences of the study's subjects by evaluating one's: (1) intentionality, (2) intuition, (3) empathy and (4) intersubjectivity (Husserl, 1970). In terms of this study, it meant focusing on: (1) the black witnesses' stated purpose for practicing sustained acts of sousveillance; (2) whether or not they intuited their bearing witness as a form of protest journalism; (3) how they viewed their bodies in relation to the world, (for example, whether they saw themselves in the body of a dead black man or woman who was gunned down by police); and (4) how they believed their individual work as black witnesses impacted the broader Black Lives Matter Movement. More specifically, the interviews attempted to answer the research question (RQ1): What is the lived experience of bearing witness while black?

The Witnesses

I grouped the participants into five cohorts that I named: (1) the Black Lives Matter activists, (2) the "Day 1's," (3) the Masters of Agitprop, (4) the Bards, and (5) the Rogues. The Black Lives Matter activists were participants who self-identified as members of an actual chapter in their community. The Day 1's were the frontline

protestors of Ferguson who believe their actions galvanized the Movement. The Masters of Agitprop were the creatives who use art as propaganda for the Movement, deftly serving as black witnesses *in* and *through* the media. The Bards provided the soundtrack to the Movement, blending Hip-hop, poetry, and Twitter to spread news. Lastly, the Rogues were associated loosely with all of these cohorts, but refuse to be labeled Black Lives Matter activists, for a variety of reasons that I will explore.

In the next section, I offer a brief biography of each witness. I highlight the vantage points from whence they bore witness. Additionally, I describe how the activists identify themselves, since I presumed they were not calling themselves "black witnesses." As a final note, I should mention that I did not prompt participants to share their sexual orientations. Some interviewees who chose to do so said they wanted me to highlight this identity marker to end the historic erasure of black, queer social activism.

The Women of Black Lives Matter. Three participants wished to be identified primarily as Black Lives Matter activists who are affiliated with an official chapter. Alicia Garza is one of the three co-founders for the organization and a CNN Disruptor. Her love letter to black people after George Zimmerman's acquittal in the Trayvon Martin murder trial in July 2013 contained the original #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. When she shared her letter to Twitter it went viral. Some said the Movement was born then. (As I will explain, however, other activists believe the Movement did not take off until August 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri.) Garza is based in Oakland, California. She is an award-winning community organizer who specialized in workplace equality in the Bay Area prior to

establishing Black Lives Matter. She self-identifies as a member of the LGBTQIA community, and emphasizes the inclusion of queer leaders in the Movement.

Marissa Johnson is the aforementioned member of the Black Lives Matter Seattle chapter. She gained notoriety in August 2015 when she interrupted Presidential hopeful Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) at his Seattle campaign rally. Her assumption of his podium dominated the news headlines for several weeks. Prior to this act of protest, Johnson organized "die-ins" at local businesses in Seattle to oppose the shooting deaths of unarmed black men by police. One such event shut down Seattle's downtown mall on Black Friday 2014. Johnson self-identifies as an evangelical Christian, a former theology student, and a biracial, queer woman.

Shellonnee Chinn is a member of the Black Lives Matter Rochester, New York chapter. She is a former educator at a prominent private secondary school in Buffalo, where she taught for 15 years. She claims she was fired after she complained about discriminatory teaching practices in the classrooms. She filed suit in federal court against her former employer in 2015. While the case is ongoing, Chinn has taken to social media to report on educational inequalities in her state.

The "Day 1's." The members in this cohort all believe that the Movement did not begin until the Ferguson, Missouri uprisings in August 2014, in the wake of Michael Brown's death. In the months that followed those protests, they called themselves the "Day 1's," to differentiate themselves from what they regard as late-coming opportunists who capitalized on legacy media appearances, but did not have actual boots on the ground in the early campaigns. They were the early fact-checkers of the Movement,

90

churning out data and eyewitness news from the frontlines that served often as a corrective to legacy media reports.

Brittany Ferrell is a native of St. Louis, Missouri. She is a founder of the now-defunct organization, Millennial Activists United (MAU). When she began protesting in the days after Brown's death, she went on Twitter to find like-minded demonstrators in her age group, since she said the earliest activists actually were mothers of Ferguson, and friends of Michael Brown's mother, Lesley McSpadden. She found Alexis Templeton and Ashley Yates (who declined to be interviewed for this study). The three women founded MAU, and pushed to have Officer Darren Wilson prosecuted for Brown's murder. Ferrell self-identifies as a mother, a nurse, and Alexis's wife. She and Templeton were married months after meeting for the first time during the protests.

Brittany Packnett is a native of St. Louis, Missouri too. She is Vice President of National Community Alliances for Teach for America, and the co-founder of Campaign Zero. Campaign Zero is a 10-point plan to reduce police violence in America.[15] Packnett created the policy-oriented organization—with DeRay Mckesson, Johnetta Elzie, and Samuel Sinyangwe—after the four met on the frontlines in Ferguson. Packnett is a former appointee to President Barack Obama's 21st Century Policing Task Force. She self-identifies as a Christian, a daughter, a sister, a community activist, and the girlfriend of civil rights photographer Reggie Cunningham.[16]

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[15] *See*: https://www.joincampaignzero.org.

[16] Cunningham is a fellow native of St. Louis who photographed the Ferguson protests extensively. *See*: http://www.bepureblack.com/untitled-gallery.

Samuel Sinyangwe is the last of the Day 1's that I interviewed. The 2012 Stanford University political science graduate was working at PolicyLink, a Bay Area social justice nonprofit, when Ferguson erupted in 2014. He said he contacted DeRay Mckesson on Twitter to ask how he could help once he arrived in the city, after noticing Mckesson's Trending Topics. Sinyangwe became Campaign Zero's chief data scientist. His first project was Mapping Police Violence, which curated data from disparate police databases around the country to a centralized corpus.[17] Sinyangwe is a native of Orlando, Florida, who said he was inspired to study political science as a means to fight for social justice when Trayvon Martin was killed in his home state. Sinyangwe self-identifies as a son and an eventual political science professor.

The Masters of Agitprop. Members in this cohort create art as social propaganda, then circulate it through legacy media and social media alongside Movement-related updates. All three activists are visual artists who have used Twitter to grow their early followings.

Devin Allen is the Baltimore-based photographer who shot the now-iconic images of the Freddie Gray protests. He is self-taught and said that the late Gordon Parks, the legendary black photographer for *LIFE* magazine, is his idol. The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. have commissioned Allen's images. Allen is a philanthropist who collects donated cameras to disseminate to

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[17] *See*: https://mappingpoliceviolence.org.

Baltimore youth. He self-identifies as a black man, a father, and a survivor of Baltimore's gang violence.

Dread Scott (née Scott Tyler) is a New York-based visual artist who creates live installations, paintings, photographs, prints and videos about African American human rights issues. Scott's most recent headline-grabbing artwork is his 2016 remake of the NAACP's historic black flag that read, "A Man Was Lynched Yesterday." The original flag flew outside the organization's headquarters in the 1930s as the group pushed for anti-lynching legislation in Congress. Scott's updated version of it reads, "A Man Was Lynched by Police Yesterday." The reimagined flag stoked as much controversy as the original. The landlord of the exhibiting museum threatened eviction if it was not removed immediately (Rogers, 2016). Scott self-identifies as a black man and an artist with "Communist sensibilities."

Lincoln Mondy is the writer and producer of the film, "Black Lives, Black Lungs." His documentary on the tobacco industry's targeting of African Americans earned him seven visits to the White House to discuss the links between the Black Lives Matter Movement and public health.[18] Mondy is a 2016 graduate of the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He screened his film at his commencement last year, and served as its keynote student speaker. Mondy now serves as a publicist for the D.C.-based BerlinRosen firm. He said he hopes to continue using film and Twitter to report on health disparities as social justice issues, within the Black Lives Matter framework. Mondy self-identifies as a biracial black man.

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[18] Proof of Lincoln Mondy's seven visits to the White House can be viewed here in the official visitor logs: http://white-house-logs.insidegov.com/d/a/Lincoln-Mondy.

The Bards. This cohort of activists works as poets and musicians. They have sustained their status as the most popular of all black witnesses in this study by providing prolific updates and thoughts on the Movement. These are the general assignment reporters of the Movement news "bureau" who seem to be everywhere at every time.

Eve Ewing is a graduate of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and a current Provost's Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago. She studies inequality in America's public education system. Ewing is a founding editor of *Seven Scribes*, which aspired to create a digital space for African American audiences to enjoy long-form journalism when it launched in 2015. The publication was born after a $10,000 Kickstarter campaign garnered more than $14,000. Ewing uses Twitter to provide updates on black activism in her native Chicago. As the daughter of a professional journalist, she is careful not to label herself as a reporter, however, even though her essays have been published in *The Nation* and *The New Yorker*. She self-identifies, instead, as an essayist, a poet, a cultural organizer, and a biracial black woman.

Clint Smith is a Ph.D. candidate in education at Harvard University. He studied alongside Ewing during her time there. He became a leading voice in the Black Lives Matter Movement when his TED Talks, *"How to Raise a Black Son in America"* and "The Danger of Silence," went viral, with more than 5 million collective views. Smith's poetry on growing up black in the Deep South, witnessing police brutality, and fearing violent death have become award-winning pieces of literature. His essays have appeared also in *The New Yorker* and *The American Poetry Review*. Smith is a very close friend to several members of Campaign Zero. (DeRay Mckesson has visited Smith's family home

in Louisiana for dinner, for example.)[19] Smith identifies as a teacher, a poet, an inequality scholar, and a black man. He is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

David Banner (née Lavell William Crump) is a graduate of Southern University, a Historically Black College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Banner began his career as a critically acclaimed rapper. After several chart-topping hits and a lucrative record deal, Banner said he began to feel conflicted about the music he was making. In 2007, he testified in a Congressional hearing on explicit rap, which Representative Bobby L. Rush, (D-Ill.) convened (Leeds, 2007). He stopped using denigrating lyrics after his testimony. He rebranded himself as a composer and took on Fortune 500 companies as clients, penning music for global advertising campaigns. When the world turned its eyes on Ferguson in 2014, however, Banner's focus shifted again. He became a sought-after lecturer on police brutality and representations of blackness in the media. His Twitter updates during the Ferguson protests earned him invitations on cable news networks, and on local TV and radio shows around the country. He visited Ferguson to facilitate meetings between the Bloods and Crips gangs, which called ceasefires to help the city heal after Michael Brown's death.[20] For all of these reasons, supporters of the Black Lives Matter Movement consider Banner a leader in the overarching campaign to end police brutality although he does not identify with the organization. Banner is a self-described Hip-hop intellectual and social entrepreneur. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

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[19] *See*: https://twitter.com/clintsmithiii/status/617494537263562752.

[20] To see the video of David Banner discussing his work in Ferguson at St. Louis's 2014 Peace Fest, visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NH7IybPBPNU.

The Rogues. This final cohort of interviewees rejects any attempts from journalists or academics to label them as activists—especially within the Black Lives Matter Movement. All three Rogues, however, have different reasons for doing so. Chris Stewart is founding partner of the Atlanta-based law firm, Stewart, Seay & Felton Trial Attorneys. He is representing the families of both Walter Scott and Alton Sterling in various lawsuits against the police departments and the individual police officers who shot both men. Stewart said he serves as an ally to anyone who is pursuing civil rights for vulnerable populations. While working with local Black Lives Matter chapters is sometimes part of this strategy, he noted that he collaborates with other organizations too. He said labeling himself as exclusively a member of any one organization might limit the scope of his work. Stewart self-identifies as a civil rights attorney and a Christian.

Ieshia Evans was the subject of the viral photographs of the Alton Sterling protests in August 2016. She was pictured in a peaceful standoff with Baton Rouge police. They were wearing riot gear. She was wearing a sundress. Evans has conducted international interviews about her involvement with the Black Lives Matter Movement since she became a media sensation. She bristles when one suggests that she is part of the organization, however, stating that no one from the group ever reached out to her after being profiled in the press. She emphasized in our interview that she went down to Baton Rouge from her native New York in the summer of 2016 on her own. Evans eventually was arrested and charged with obstructing a highway. After being released from jail, she said she planned to return to New York and live a quiet life. When someone created a fake Twitter account in her name, however, she decided to bear witness on the platform

with her own verified account. Evans self-identifies as a "regular girl" from Brooklyn and a black woman.

Mark Luckie has toed the line between legacy media and black witnessing as a citizen journalist. Luckie is a former *Washington Post* National Innovations editor who went on to work as Twitter's first Manager of Journalism and News in 2012. By the end of his tenure at Twitter in 2015, Luckie lamented the life of an African American staffer at the company in an essay on *Medium*, entitled, "What it's actually like to be a Black employee at a tech company."[21] He wrote: "Witnessing firsthand the lack of faces of color instilled in me the desire to apply my technology skills toward the visibility of Blacks in media." Luckie left Twitter to join the staff of Reddit in February 2016. The social bookmarking service named him its first-ever Head of Journalism and Media. Nine months later, however, he quit, citing the same lack of diversity he witnessed at Twitter. He launched his own site, *Today in #BlackTwitter*, to amplify voices from the Black Lives Matter Movement in January 2016. He shuttered that webpage in the fall of 2016, citing the desire to escape the "litany of hashtags of slain black men and women," which traumatized him, he said. He launched SouledOut Cinema in October 2016, which aims to produce and/or screen positive black films. He said he wanted African Americans to have a "healing space where they could laugh and see themselves whole and happy." On Twitter, he analyzes representations of blackness in the news and popular culture. Luckie self-identifies as a former journalist and a gay, black man. He is based in New York City.

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[21] *See:* http://bit.ly/2nQ4q0H.

The Narrative Themes

I used descriptive coding software, called MaxQDA, to annotate 672 segments across 15 interviews. Twelve narrative themes emerged: (1) revision, (2) responsibility, (3) redress, (4) regards, (5) retrospect, (6) risk, (7) rage, (8) redemption, (9) reflection, (10) requiem, (11) regret, and (12) religion. I will explain what each code means briefly, then provide examples from the corpus in the following section.

I used the "revision" code if the subject spoke explicitly about their efforts to correct or reframe an existing news media narrative. I used the "responsibility" code if the subject talked about feeling a sense of duty to bear witness. The "redress" code was employed if the subject spoke specifically about using journalism as a tool to galvanize social change. The "regards" code tagged all references to love for black people and/or African American culture. I used the "retrospect" code if the interviewee made a direct link between their activism and that of black social movements past. The "risk" code was applied when participants talked about the inherent danger that protest journalism poses to their lives. When activists talked about how their anger motivated them to report news, I coded it with the "rage" tag. If participants said that they wanted to use their news reports to humanize vilified protestors or victims of police violence, I coded it "redemption." I used the "reflection" code if study subjects talked about either seeing themselves in the bodies of the slain or relating to the dead by virtue of physical proximity to where the slain lived and died. I tagged segments with the "requiem" code if participants talked about using journalism to mourn the dead. The "regret" code was employed if participants explicitly stated that they were sorry that they ever began

reporting on the Movement. Lastly, I used the "religion" code if the subject said they felt led by a higher power to bear witness.

The top five codes were: (1) revision, with 152 coded segments; (2) responsibility, with 121 coded segments; (3) redress, with 72 coded segments; (4) regards, with 67 coded segments; and (5) retrospect, with 67 coded segments (Table 5; Chart 1). The least popular codes were "regret" and "religion," which tied at 6 coded segments each.

Table 5—Narrative Themes

Code	Number of Segments
Revision	152
Responsibility	121
Redress	72
Regards	67
Retrospect	67
Risk	52
Rage	50
Redemption	35
Reflection	29
Requiem	15
Regret	6
Religion	6
TOTAL CODED SEGMENTS	**672**

Chart 1—Narrative Themes
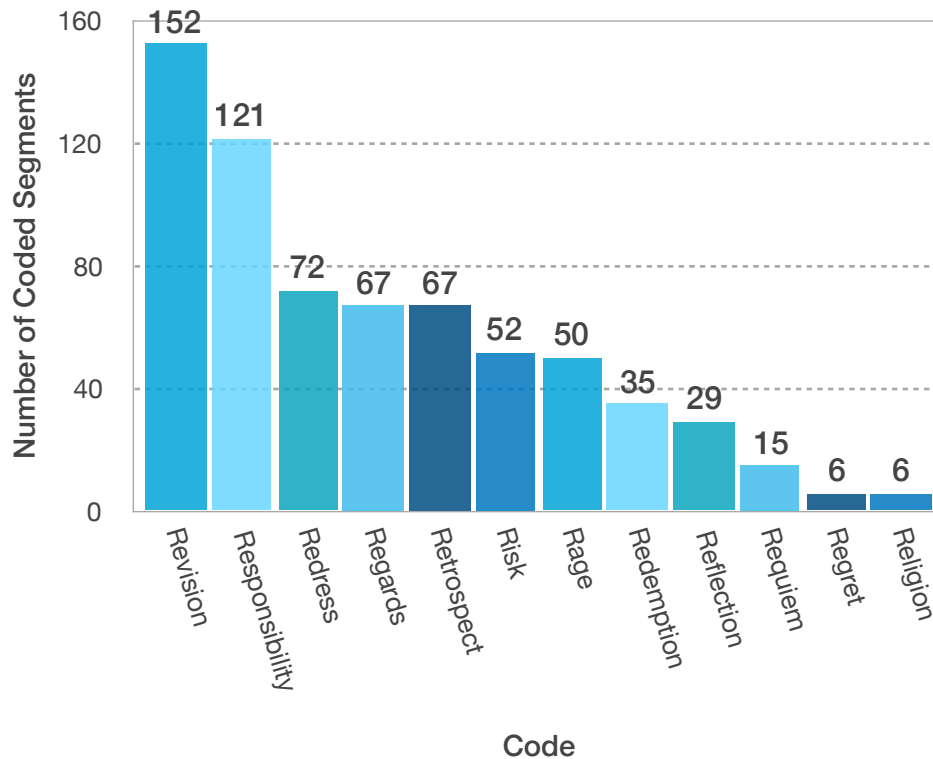
Common Code Co-occurrences

I found 428 co-occurrences of the 12 codes. This means that a subject spoke of two concepts in the same sentence. Participants most commonly talked about "regards" or love for black people going hand-in-hand with their sense of personal "responsibility" to report news. I noticed this code co-occurrence 21 times. The second most common code co-occurrence was "revision" and "redress," at 19 instances. This means that participants talked about wanting to use their protest journalism to change both news narratives and political policies simultaneously. The third most popular co-occurrence was "revision" and "responsibility," where participants spoke of a personal duty to change news narratives, by virtue of their propinquity to a precipitating event, or due to a special set of skills they believe that they possess.

The Lived Experiences

I have offered a macro-level analysis of the interview results to this point. I have shared the five categories of witnesses I interviewed. I described the 12 codes I found, and quantified how often it occurred or co-occurred in the corpus. I would like to share the interviewees' lived experiences now, in their own words. The phenomenological frame that I used to develop my interview map included four points of evaluation: (1) intentionality, (2) intuition, (3) empathy and (4) intersubjectivity (Husserl, 1970). I found that each of the 12 codes corresponded to one of these points of evaluation within my phenomenological frame (Table 6).

Table 6—Narrative Analysis via Phenomenology

Point of Evaluation	Interview Focal Point	Corresponding Codes
Intentionality	The activists' stated purpose for practicing sustained acts of witnessing.	revision redress rage
Intuition	Whether or not the activists intuit their bearing witness as a form of journalism.	responsibility regards regret
Empathy	How the activists view their bodies in relation to the world around them.	reflection requiem risk
Intersubjectivity	How the activists believe their bearing witness impacts the broader Movement.	retrospect redemption religion

Intentionality. I wanted to know the anti-police brutality activists' stated purposes for practicing sustained acts of witnessing. The activists told me that revision, redress, and rage were their primary motivators.

Revision. By and large, the participants in this study said that they report news to revise existing news narratives. This was the most popular code in the corpus. The activists aim to challenge sensationalism and/or factual errors in legacy reports and to oppose black news myths.

Revising news sensationalism and/or errors. Many interviewees said that professional journalists did not do a good job covering the protests in which they took part. Brittany Packnett, for example, is one of the "Day 1's." She was activated to bear witness to Ferguson on Twitter after seeing news reports that conflicted with what she experienced on the frontlines. She said:

> People would be watching a live feed on CNN and CNN was sitting there saying people are breaking into the McDonald's—there's more looting happening. Well, we would go on the [live] streams and what we'd be tweeting is that people are being tear-gassed and they're breaking into the McDonald's because they had milk in the McDonald's and milk is what you have to use on tear-gas. Not water. Right? And so that is the instantaneous correction that you're allowed to have.… We challenged the mainstream media who were outsiders to our community, to tell the truth.

Packnett said that she continued to use Twitter to provide updates on the Movement after Ferguson ceased to be headline news because, "media needs to always be held accountable," she said, adding, "…the same kind of relationship that we should have with the free press, it's the same kind of relationship we should have with Democracy. We should engage with it and reserve our right to criticize."

For Ieshia Evans, bearing witness on Twitter was a more reluctant endeavor. When she participated in her first demonstration in July 2016—to protest Alton Sterling's killing in Baton Rouge—she said she was surprised to see it portrayed in the news as a riot. She said: "People were boisterous, they were rowdy as far as being very vocal but there was no violence. There was nobody throwing things." Evans said that the police on the scene became increasingly physical, however, and started "pushing the protestors into the grass." She explained that the cops' behavior led to her now-iconic standoff:

> What kind of enraged me at this point was that you're giving us permission to protest in the grass but then you have police officers beating on their shields and bashing up the protesters while they're already in the grass. You have this line of police officers in the street. I don't even know what came over me but, I just decided to stand in the street, like what's your goal here? What's your purpose here? What's the reason why you guys are decked out in your war gear, and I'm in a sundress?

Attorney Chris Stewart, who traveled also to Baton Rouge from his native Atlanta to represent the Sterling family in the summer of 2016, said, "I was down there the whole time. It wasn't mass riots everywhere. The demonstrations were really just certain streets, certain areas, and a lot of them were just kind of standoffs between the police and the protestors. It wasn't like there were these crazy riots that it appeared to be at times, I mean it just wasn't. You know, you're just kind of at the will of whatever the media says." Stewart said he disliked how the news media framed the Baton Rouge cop killer, who emerged after the Sterling shooting, as a member of Black Lives Matter:

> The guy who did that heinous crime and shot those officers in Baton Rouge, that had nothing to do with the cases, [or] with Alton Sterling. That was just a deranged individual who did something crazy. That was not related to Black Lives Matter…It was a crazy guy who did something, and we see examples of crazy people doing stuff all the time, I mean Dylann Roof going, shooting up that whole church, the narrative in the media wasn't, 'All white guys aged 19 or 20 are evil,' or, 'He had the Confederate flag a lot and did all that.'

Evans said that after the photograph of her standoff with the Baton Rouge police went viral, she began to notice factual errors in official news reports. She explained: "When I came out they were telling people I was 35 and I work for something-or-the-other and I was like, 'Wait hold up!' I stopped watching TV." For the record, Evans was 28 years old at the time of our interview. Still, Evans said that she was a self-proclaimed technological "grandma." She almost tuned out of social media too, until identity theft compelled her to join Twitter. She said:

> So I was actually instructed—I was given advice—that it would be beneficial for me to get a Twitter account just because there are a lot of people who are posers out there. Initially I'm thinking, 'Okay, I'm a regular girl from Brooklyn. Who's going to want to pretend to be me?' Right? But lo and behold someone actually did make a fake profile. With my likeness and everything. So Twitter actually helped to make sure this was me. Even Facebook right after was like we need some type of identification to make sure this is really you.

Devin Allen—who photographed the Freddie Gray protests in Baltimore in April 2015—spoke of a different kind of identity theft:

> Why do white people feel like they want to always have to tell our story? It's so many other issues in the white community, but they don't go document them. Heroin is ripping through the white community, killing young, white adults, but you don't see our [black] journalists running and scrambling, trying to completely focus on that, but when it comes to Black Lives Matter, oh, they there front and center. I've ran into issues with a lot of white journalists. A lot of them had this fetish for black pain, and that bothers me because at the end of the day, it's so many other things that you can cover.

This general distrust—even cynicism—of news media was a running theme amongst the activists. When I pressed them for specific examples of journalistic errors that made them feel this way, many had anecdotes to share. Attorney Chris Stewart, for example, was nonplussed by the news reports that stated Black Lives Matter organized and led a rally to raise awareness about the police killing a man named Deandre Phillips in February 2017.

Stewart said:

> Seventy percent of that crowd was white, but when I watched the news that night, they called it a Black Lives Matter rally, and they only showed the black people, which I thought was just hilarious, because everybody out there was just shocked how many white people were out there supporting it, but you didn't see that. I get it, I mean that's fine, that kills the narrative that white people don't support Black Lives Matter and all that stuff, because they did help organize the rally, but along with about four other groups [too]. Through social media, I was able to show what the crowd really looked like.

Stewart tweeted a crowd shot that day to counter the legacy media reports he began to see elsewhere, he said. "[When] social media covers stuff, it's kind of like a snowball effect," he said, adding, "Once it starts rolling and it starts picking up and picking up and picking up, it's just really effective to let people know what's going on. Other than that, you have to rely on TV news, and that's not the most effective way, because you have no **control** [*emphasis mine*] over that."

Devin Allen spoke in terms of power also; especially when I asked if he ever would work as a photographer for a legacy media publication. He said:

> Once you work for those places, you don't **control** [*emphasis mine*] the narrative of your photos. The thing is, with me and my work, I told the story first, so it was like when they want to use my pictures, I'm already telling them what's going on. …I feel like the rate that we're going, we're going to have our own media outlets. That's the end goal, to be able to **control** [*emphasis mine*] our narrative and basically counteract. I see a lot on social media where you'll have places like CNN report these things, and then you'll see…other blogs like, 'Oh no. We was there. We was on the ground.' There ain't no middle man.

Brittany Ferrell was a frontline Ferguson protestor, more than 800 miles away from Allen's native Baltimore. Still, she speaks of her use of Twitter to counter-frame in the same tones. She explained, "The upside is it [Twitter] definitely has helped me get the message out to the people who want to support this Movement. It allows me a place to tell the truth without any bias or anybody policing the things that I choose to say, the things that I choose to tell the world.…It's like we are so much better connected in this

struggle via social media because we know where to turn to when we need the truth."
Ferrell also shares that when she was tear-gassed, veteran Arab Spring protestors in
Palestine tweeted her to share the milk remedy.

Revising black news myths. The final area of revision that some witnesses spoke
about was the desires to shatter the myth of black criminality. One witness uses his
knowledge of statistics to spar with professional journalists and police departments.
Another witness tweets what he finds in his own investigations of police brutality with
the public, to show that African Americans are telling the truth. Yet another witness said
he photographs his community to provide the black human interest stories that news
media tend to marginalize.

Samuel Sinyangwe is a data scientist and one of the Day 1's. He found DeRay
Mckesson on Twitter, he said, and asked him how he could help in Ferguson. Within
days, he took a leave of absence from his job at PolicyLink, a Bay Area think-tank. Once
he arrived in Missouri, he said he kept hearing the same two narratives: either that
shootings like these were one-off events or that all shootings of unarmed black men
began because the slain men had resisted arrest. He said: "I think when Mike Brown was
killed in Ferguson and the protests started across the country, there was just this huge
question about are these police shootings isolated incidents or a broader systemic issue?
That was a data question, and every time that that was being asked, people were like,
'Well, we don't have the data." Sinyangwe said he discovered that the federal
government does not collect data on fatal police shootings, but websites such as *Fatal*

Encounters or *KilledbyPolice.net* did, he said. He decided to merge the data from both sites

first. Then, he filled in the many statistical gaps. He explained:

> I just got the data [and] got the trial version of Tableau [software]. I filled in the
> gaps. About 40% of the records were not identified by race, and so I went
> through social media profiles—like every social media [platform], like Facebook,
> Twitter, Instagram—went through obituaries, criminal records databases, and
> between those could actually identify more than 90% of the people in the
> database. Then for armed or unarmed—nobody was keeping track of that—so I
> had to go through all of the reports, both the community perspective, the police
> perspective, all of that, to identify that column. That was the dataset.

Sinyangwe said that being armed with this data made him realize that he could tell

different stories about police brutality. I asked him to talk about a time when he believed

his investigative reporting shifted an actual narrative in legacy news coverage of an

event. His eyes lit up and a wide smile crossed his face. He explained a triumph in

Colorado, where a police department challenged his data, only to find out their numbers

were incorrect. A local reporter wrote a scathing investigative piece about the

department's underreporting of fatal police encounters. He said:

> They got embarrassed in that article, but that's the crazy part about the work: it's
> the people who are supposed to be the professionals, like the criminologists and
> the professors and the FBI director and the police chiefs, they actually don't have
> as much data as I have sitting in my computer. It's easy to run circles around
> them in that way. I think that is cool and empowering, when you can actually,
> without institutional power, you can have power by having access to the data and
> to information.

Sinyangwe also said he targeted his analyses on his home state of Florida when he

realized that Orlando was "off the charts in terms of every level of police violence,

whether it was use of force or stops and searches, arrests or killings," he said. He

explained that once he realized this trend, he convened a meeting with the Orlando Police

Department's leadership. The officers claimed that the high rates of excessive force were

due to equally high rates of tourism. Sinyangwe crunched more numbers. He told

107

Orlando PD that their rates were higher than New Orleans and Las Vegas, which have equal—if not more—annual visitors than Orlando. "They didn't have a response," Sinyangwe said, adding, "Nobody else could come and say, 'Actually, we have the data comparing you to all these other tourist locations.' After that, they were like, 'Okay, we're going to listen.'"

Sinyangwe said he then audited the Orlando Police Department's use of force policy to show that the agency did not have a rule that restricted officers from using lethal force as a final resort. The police department in Tampa, about 90 miles away from Orlando, did. Sinyangwe said, "We're like, 'Well, you know, Tampa has this policy in place. You guys don't have this policy in place, and this policy is associated with a 25% reduction in police brutality,' because we did that analysis. They didn't really have a response." Sinyangwe said the final pieces of data that helped convince Orlando's police department to change its excessive force policies were his findings on why people were stopped by police in the first place. "We also showed that of the people getting killed by police, those interactions were starting off with people who were suspected of, quote, 'suspicious activity,' or drug possession—like small, minor things that then get escalated into deadly force. That helped **debunk this narrative** [*emphasis mine*] that police were killing people because they were trying to apprehend violent criminals," Sinyangwe said.

After Sinyangwe recounted what he regards as his major victories, I asked how professional journalists respond to his investigative reporting. After all, he tweets all of the statistics he finds in near real-time and even fact-checks *their* work. He laughed wryly. He said that some journalists respect his data. Others seem to be waiting for him to

make a mistake. He talks about July 2016, for example, as one of the most fast-paced reporting cycles he has endured in the wake of the back-to-back killings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling. He recalled that after the news first broke about Sterling's death, he engaged in what he called "rapid response." He said:

> As soon as that [Sterling shooting] happened, I'm opening my computer, pulling the spreadsheet, pulling all the facts for Baton Rouge. I tweet them all out immediately about the disparities, how they rank with other the [police] Departments, about how that's related to policy issues—all of that so that that can then get incorporated in the media coverage. All of that has to happen in seconds and minutes after stuff happens, so you always have to be on the job. You always have to be alert. You never know when something's going to happen and you have to be able to respond immediately to those situations, and you can't fuck up. That's the other thing. They don't have any data, but they're still able to **control narratives** [*emphasis mine*], and that's crazy, but if we have any problems with our data, like all of a sudden we are the people you shouldn't listen to. That's a different double standard. Our shit has to be right all the time…[President] Trump has been saying some shit like the murder rate is the highest in 47 years. A lot of people believe it. Obviously, that's wrong, but he can say that shit. If I said that shit, I'd be out of the game. It's a different situation.

While Sinyangwe shares his truth in numbers, Chris Stewart said he has reported on what he has found in his independent investigations as a civil rights lawyer. He said he was sitting in church one Sunday in April 2015 when he received an urgent message through Facebook's text messaging feature on his smartphone. It was Walter Scott's niece. "She messaged me and said it was an emergency, and said that her uncle had just gotten killed the night before, and the family really wanted to talk to an attorney. She had seen all of the work that I had done on other civil rights cases on Facebook, and she had gone to our website and all that stuff," Stewart said. He promised to contact her after the worship service concluded. When Stewart eventually connected with Scott's brothers and mother by phone, he said he felt the police department's official report sounded suspicious.

109

He said:

> The video wasn't out. You know, we didn't even know there *was* a video. They
> asked me to look into it online through the articles, and tell me what I thought. I
> looked at the articles that were out in the media, but they were all saying that
> Walter Scott had tried to kill the officer…[and] you have to kind of go with your
> gut, and it just didn't sound right—a man that age fighting a cop—none of it
> made sense. The family said if I could be there by the morning, then they would
> pick me as their lawyer, so we hopped in the car and drove eight hours up there.
> Then once we got up there, we started hearing rumors that there was a videotape.

Stewart said he began to share limited updates to the case on Twitter, with the

family's permission, although he did share that he prefers the slower pace of Facebook.

He said it allows him to answer questions from supporters more thoughtfully.

The final news myth that one of the interviewees works to overcome is that of

black marginality. Devin Allen said that he tries to show the beauty that he sees in black

Baltimore; not just its turmoil. "Literally, I try to tell people with my art in Baltimore, if

you see me taking pictures, I'm not wandering around," he said, adding: "All my pictures

are in West Baltimore for the most part—you might catch me over East sometimes, but I

rarely go in East Baltimore—so you don't see pictures of East Baltimore. I'm not one of

these people going out looking for something. This is my life."

Allen mentioned that his earlier work before the Freddie Gray uprisings captured

black women with "natural hair, no makeup, not models, just my friends," he said. He

endeavored also to photograph the positive things police officers did in his community to

provide balance to black-versus-blue tropes. He admitted this was difficult to do initially:

> The thing is, I had so many run-ins with the police, and I still do. I'd get pulled
> over for the dumbest things, but the thing is, growing up in Baltimore, we learned
> at a very young age how to avoid them. Definitely from me being outside and
> being on the corner, I know how to…I can tell the police when I see one….
> [Now], some police actually know me and that's pretty cool…I want police
> officers to start being in the community. Any time I see a police officer in the
> community that's just there, like, trying, I try to capture that. I seen a cop playing
> basketball with some kids, no camera around or nothing—completely authentic.

Like Sinyangwe, Allen said he feels his reportage creates entry points for dialogue between African Americans and police. He explained, "My photography has allowed me into spaces to literally influence some changes. Anytime I can have an art show and have the [Baltimore City] police Commissioner on the panel…" he shook his head incredulously. He fought back tears as he added, "I did an art show for my youth, and he [the Commissioner] came. I was like, 'I want him on the panel. He needs to be on the panel. He needs to see my kids' work. Period.'"

"This is the area that police are constantly…" his voice trailed off.

"People are being…" his voice cracked. Allen paused to collect himself. He sighed deeply and said, "This is where Freddie Gray is from, and … if you don't smother and kill our kids—this is what they can do."

Redress. Redress was the second code that was triggered when the anti-police brutality activists were questioned about their intentionality. All of the activists said that they believe their bearing witness has the power to affect social and political change. More specifically, they talked about using Twitter to create dialogue around policing reform; to offer perspectives on why the two-party political system is failing in the United States; and even to challenge the Twitter platform itself as a potential site of oppression.

Redressing police brutality. Chris Stewart explained that Twitter has allowed him to provide balanced views of what reforming police brutality would require systemically. As an attorney, he said he has seen both sides of law enforcement: the good police

111

officers and the bad ones. Twitter allows him to share these nuanced, expert analyses with

a broad audience. He said:

> [T]he majority of police officers are doing a good job. But when the bad ones screw up, they still ride off of the 'not having to answer questions,' or not being forthright with what really happened, because nobody questions them. That has to stop, because if you did the right thing, then the evidence will show it, and if you abused your powers because you were in a bad mood or you're just a hothead or whatever it may be, then you don't deserve to wear that badge.

Stewart added that part of his reportage involves educating the public on the

importance of the various branches of government. At the time of our interview, then-

Sen. Jefferson "Jeff" Sessions, III (R-Ala.) was in the throes of his Senate confirmation

hearing for the position of U.S. Attorney General. It was one of President Trump's more

controversial nominations, as many Americans believed that his appointment would turn

back the clock on civil rights legislation. Sens. Corey Booker (D-NJ) and Elizabeth

Warren (D-Mass.) offered unprecedented testimonies against Sessions—never before had

sitting senators opposed a fellow Congressman's nomination in the confirmation process.

I asked Stewart what he thought Sessions would mean for the Movement. He said:

> People really don't fully understand the power that the Department of Justice has in civil rights. Under the last administration the DoJ had more investigations ever in the history of the department, and it's very important. One way that I've tried to explain it is…let's say with Walter Scott, with the state prosecution, if there was no federal investigation, [Officer Michael Slager] would be free, awaiting maybe the other trial if they proceed, but there would be no DoJ trial coming up. With Alton Sterling, we're still waiting to hear if they're going to charge the officers.[22]

These select peeks into the inner workings of the Movement are what Sinyangwe

said he likes to offer on Twitter as well. He said his involvement with Campaign Zero

during the last three years has placed him at the table with nearly all of the Democratic

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[22] On May 3, 2017, the US Department of Justice announced it would not bring federal charges against the officers who killed Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge. His family conducted this interview on NPR: http://n.pr/2p8GdQj.

Presidential hopefuls of the 2015-2017 election cycle. He said that his Twitter updates

have positioned him as the "policy shop within the Movement." For example, after a

Black Lives Matter activist interrupted former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley at a

Netroots Nation political conference in July 2015, Sinyangwe said that the candidate "got

embarrassed" and asked for his help. He explained:

> It was a disaster for him. He already had a disastrous campaign, so at that point, his campaign was desperate and they needed to know what they could do to make up for this, and they hadn't yet released an agenda. They reached out to us because, first of all, we had connections with folks in their campaign, but they also knew that we had policy solutions since we launched Campaign Zero. They were like, 'Look, we need an agenda on policing that is real,' and so we drafted their entire agenda and they adopted it pretty much word-for-word.

Sinyangwe said he met with Sanders and Clinton soon after the O'Malley assist,

to create their platforms too. His Twitter timeline bears witness to his campaigns for

redress. Pictures of him seated at the table with the candidates dot his timeline alongside

his statistics and musings.

Redressing "algorithms of oppression." Scholars recently have begun to study the

underlying structures of search engines and social media platforms to reveal so-called

"algorithms of oppression." Safiya Noble (2013) explained "This research points toward

a type of cultural hegemony within Google's results on racialized and gendered identities,

which prioritize the interests of its commercial partners and advertisers, rather than

rendering the social, political and economic interests of Black women and girls visible."

Noble notes also "Online racial disparities cannot be ignored in search because it is part

of the organizing logic within which information communication technologies proliferate,

and the Internet is both reproducing social relations and creating new forms of relations

based on our engagement with it" (p. 3). I asked Mark Luckie if these findings translated

to Twitter and Reddit, where he has worked. While he declined to elaborate on the

algorithms that underpin Twitter's architecture, he said:

> I left Twitter because I felt it was not catering to a group of people who were
> using the site more than anyone else.…Then I joined Reddit [and the] Black
> Lives Matter Movement was the spark that inspired me to leave Reddit. I just felt
> that once again a company was not speaking to me as an African American. So I
> said, you know, it's time to kick rocks. I never considered myself an activist
> before, but now I see that I am. These online spaces were not really designed
> with us in mind, but we are using them anyway to share jokes, to do social
> movements, and to connect. And it baffles them!

Luckie said he launched *Today in #BlackTwitter* because he wanted like-minded

users to find each other easily. Beyond hashtags, the platform offers no content curation

services for discrete audiences. Luckie said it was a feature he pushed for internally as a

Twitter employee, yet it never materialized. As an independent witness, however, he can

be that news aggregator now, he said.

In a comical twist, I should note, some activists have created their own methods

for overcoming Twitter's Trending Topics algorithms. They have learned to manipulate

what they want to rise to prominence on the platform. Brittany Packnett, for example,

said she never tweets the current President's full name, instead using the abbreviated,

"Tr*mp" as a stand-in. "It started off as a joke," she explained, adding, "I feel there's a

power we give him every time we say his name—especially if all of these psychologists

are correct in identifying the potential for creating narcissism there. It feeds that [ego] to

keep saying his name. So I want to be able to refer to him without feeding that—without

feeding the trend—because when you type 'Trump' into Twitter it feeds into looking like

a trend and that's what he wants. So that's not what I'm going to give him. That's

basically it."

Redressing the Democrats. Packnett's play on words provide a perfect segue into the final area of redress one activist covers in her news updates often: the nation's two-party political system. Marissa Johnson said her interruption of Sen. Bernie Sanders illuminated flaws in how African Americans think of Democrats as the party that champions their causes. Many of her tweets criticized Democrats during the election, as a result. Johnson explained:

> The [Bernie Sanders] crowd was super violent and threw things at us, called for the police to come and taze us, which shows how progressive you are. First of all, everybody in that crowd had protested a politician before because they're all like super granola liberals. They've all protested for environmentalism and you know —whatever. But they are calling for the Seattle Police Department—which, by the way, is under federal consent decree for racist and excessive force policing— they called for the police to come and taze us.

Johnson adds that a white audience member even bit one of her white allies as they left the rally.

Rage. To a lesser degree, two activists spoke of anger when questioned about their intentionality as a black witness. They said that rage sparked them to bear witness continuously, even when protests subside. When asked to clarify the objects of their anger, they said that they were mad at perceived media opportunists (from inside and outside of the Movement), and at the legacy of America's justice system working against African Americans, in general.

Rage against perceived opportunists. Devin Allen explained that his rapid rise to fame brought with it a flood of opportunists who were looking to capitalize from his work. He alleges that a white freelance photographer exploited the children in his community by conducting an offensive photo shoot. Allen explained:

> He decided that he wanted to pose kids with toy guns with their middle finger up and then try to sell it to a publication. The first thing you know as journalist, if you pose someone, you have to state that this is a posed image. He tried to sell it to NPR, but he couldn't sell it because he didn't have the kids' names, but then he had the nerve to go back to the youth center and ask for their names and their parents' permission to try to sell this image.

Allen said he turned to Twitter to apologize publicly to the families of those affected. He said that it was not the only incident in which he had to do so, however. He spoke of another episode, where a professional journalist loaned Allen a camera to teach photography to Baltimore youth for a few days. Allen said he forgot to take the SD memory card out of the camera, and the journalist tried to pass the images off as his own. Allen said he was devastated that he had left his youth vulnerable to appropriation. "I felt bad because I was a gateway for this guy in the community, and people trusted him," Allen said.

Rage against punitive systems. Ieshia Evans said that bearing witness on Twitter since protesting Baton Rouge was born, partly, out of rage toward the American justice system. She said that she is still in disbelief that peaceful protest is really "not a First Amendment right for everybody," as she was arrested during her stand. "I had to ask what I was being charged with. The officer…told me he didn't know. I didn't even know what I was being charged with until my bond was posted—until they had an amount for me to bail out of jail with. Until then I didn't know what I was being detained for in *prison*! Not jail. Not no central bookings. It's real in Louisiana." Evans said the process went against everything she thought she knew about the judicial process.

Similarly, Shellonnee Chinn said that she tweets to show people just how long it takes a case to go through the judicial process. "It takes years," she said, shaking her

head. She said she also tweets to show that the some police terrorize black families. She explained, "If you saw the movie *Twelve Years A Slave*, to me, it was just like the scene when they [the sheriffs] put the black female on the wagon and they just rolled her away and she said, 'Tell my mom, tell them I love them.' They didn't care then. It's the same mindset now. They put us on a cart and roll us away…That's why they [the Cleveland police] could shoot at [12-year-old] Tamir Rice that way. Because he didn't matter to them. They didn't see somebody's little boy."

Intuition. I sought to determine whether or not the activists intuit their bearing witness as a form of protest journalism, as the second phenomenological probe. Only one of the activists framed their Twitter updates and cellphone videos in terms of doing journalism. In fact, even those with some journalism experience, either as freelance essayists or former journalists, balked at the title of "journalist," for there is a general consensus among the activists that reporters work for the elite class—not the working- and middle-class people that the Movement aims to serve. The interviewees used phrases such as "sharing news," "telling the truth," "giving *our* side of the story," or "providing updates in real-time," instead of using the word "journalism." On the other hand, the activists are keenly aware that their gazing *is* an act of protest. Their responses in this vein triggered the "responsibility," "regards," and "regret" codes.

Responsibility. Despite the persistent side-stepping of the word "journalism," the activists still expressed the occupational *ethos* that many professional journalists likely would say that they have. For example, the interviewees all spoke of being guided by a sense of responsibility to let people know the facts. Moreover, the interviewees

frequently said that their Black Lives Matter reportage also stemmed from a duty to: (1) use their education or professional skills for social justice; and (2) open doors for future activists and storytellers.

Responsibility to use one's craft for social justice. Gordon Parks (1966) once wrote "I use my camera as a weapon against all the things I dislike about America—poverty, racism, discrimination." Devin Allen spoke of his photography in similar terms, 50 years later. He said:

> I believe if you're a writer, the pen is your weapon. That's like if you're a rapper or a singer: Your voice is your weapon. That's why I think it's so important that as black artists, definitely in Hip hop, we need to focus on these issues, because your voice reaches the masses. My pictures reach the masses.

Allen noted that he is self-taught. The road to bearing witness to the world has been filled with on-the-job training, he said. He feels obligated, therefore, to share what he has learned with other would-be black witnesses. "I didn't know what the hell a grant was growing up," he said, laughing. "This stuff, they didn't teach us in school. Now…I'm working on two grants right now." He said he shows youth how to identify and apply for project funding in this way now. These workshops are advertised on his Twitter timeline.

Eve Ewing, our Chicago bard, said she uses Twitter in a similar way. She said people often think of movements as needing only a single, charismatic male leader. She shared that when she helped organize a demonstration in front of the Chicago Police Department's Homan Square facility in North Lawndale in July 2016, however, she realized that the Movement needed much more. The Homan Square facility is a so-called "black site" of illegal interrogation, she said, where Chicago police allegedly take African Americans in without legal representation, subject them to torture, and coerce them into

making false confessions. Activists from Black Lives Matter, Black Youth Project 100, and Let Us Breathe worked as a coalition to produce a sit-in that they dubbed the "Freedom Square Occupation."[23] For one month, they chained themselves together in front of the facility, demanding answers about missing black suspects. Ewing said she never stopped tweeting during her involvement. She recalled:

> When [we] first set up, we spent a lot of time communicating and people were like, 'Eve can you make this flyer in an hour?' 'Can you do this or this?'…Me and my friend Xavier were like, okay everybody has to eat tonight we both have cars. Let's go to the grocery store and get a bunch of meat that we can grill and a bunch of chips. After that day I put out these tweets and was like the revolution needs graphic designers. The revolution needs people that can show up to meetings.[24] The revolution needs people that can paint, people that can sew, people that can set up security systems on people's phones so that their phones don't get hacked, people that know how to pitch a tent, people that own sound systems and know how to do audio/visual stuff.[25]

Since Ewing posted her series of tweets on how people can use their talents to fuel the Movement, the thread has been retweeted several thousand times. It has become a mantra of sorts for organizers, who often ask her permission to recite it at meetings, she said.

Ewing's Harvard classmate, Clint Smith, had personal responsibility at the forefront of his mind too as he began his graduate-level studies at one of the world's most elite institutions in 2014. Ferguson erupted during the first week of his doctoral program. It haunted him, he said:

> I found myself sitting in the library for 12 hours a day, reading Zeno [the founder of the Stoic philosophy], and reading about, broadly, the sort of history of racial inequality in the United States. I was reading all these books…and this sociology,

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[23] Note that alternative media called the protest site "Freedom Square" in its headline for the news story. See: http://dnain.fo/29VTseX. The mainstream *Chicago Tribune*, however, called the site a "tent city" in its headline, which conjures up images of homelessness and moral decline. See: http://trib.in/2obBQXM. In Ch. 2, I referenced Teun van Dijk's discourse analysis of European newspapers, which found that racism is reinforced in news headlines. I found anecdotal proof of his claims here.

[24] https://twitter.com/eveewing/status/758381013911343104.

[25] https://twitter.com/eveewing/status/758382111984349185.

and this history, and this political science that was completely recalibrating the way that I understood inequality in the United States. I was like, man, this is really important information that I feel like most people don't know. I think we were seeing the very direct manifestations of that history enact themselves in the streets every day, where people are being killed, and protestors were rising up, and I started graduate school the same week Mike Brown was killed, and so it was impossible for me to disentangle what I saw happening in the world and what I was reading about in my books. I started to use Twitter as a way to share snippets of what was I was learning.

Dread Scott said he felt a similar urge to educate when he began to bear witness. He said he found the 2014 cellphone video of Eric Garner being choked to death incredibly difficult to watch. "If you have children, what do you tell them when you say, 'Well yeah, there was video of Eric Garner being choked to death,' and yet his killers walk free? What do you tell them?…It actually points to really clearly you actually have to fight," he said.

Those who engage, however, in the high-profile fights are not those who bear the most responsibility, David Banner said. He shared that although he would like to see more wealthy rappers involved in the Movement, he understands why this is not so. "As much dope music as I've put out, I don't make no money on rap. Black folks don't buy rap and it's so sad because one of the reasons why you don't have more of a revolution there in rap is because black folks don't support it," he lamented, adding, "Everybody wants Jay-Z to speak up. Why should he? Y'all ain't buying his albums; Samsung did. Y'all want help from a black [celebrity] and y'all want it for free. If you're a successful rapper, 9 times out of 10 you get paid by some white folks. So why should they fight for you when [white] people are supporting them?"

Highlighting the criticism that Jay-Z has received regarding his relative silence on Black Lives Matter is tangential to this narrative analysis. It is worth noting, however,

that the nature of Banner's assertion is Marxism steeped in Critical Race Theory. He is saying that the Movement cannot rely solely on Black elites because their involvement disrupts the balances of their labor and wages. In my literature review, I posited that black activists intuit the power structures that guide their work. Although they may not label it as "Marxist" or "Foucauldian" when prompted, they understand that their participation upsets or disrupts the normative order of things. Banner added, for example, "We want other rappers to do it [protest], but I don't think they're built for that. The revolution is not going to come from someone who has benefited from white supremacy." Banner added that he felt a responsibility to be one of the few.

Responsibility to open doors for future activists and storytellers. One outcome I did not anticipate was the degree to which the participants were thinking about future generations of activists and storytellers. While I imagined they envisioned themselves on a continuum of black activism, having assumed the mantle from a prior leader, I heard a lot of talk also about what the brave new world would look like for their descendants. Some spoke of their own children in these terms. Other talked about the broader community of black youth around the world.

Devin Allen, for example, said he is bearing witness now because, "I'm trying to open up doors. My daughter loves photography. She can walk through those doors now [because] I walked through these doors." He added, "At the end of the day, these doors open about this big." He held his index finger and thumb a small distance apart and said "Then they shut behind us. We need to knock these doors down and make sure they are not rebuilt." In a broader sense, Allen said he is bearing witness for all black children in

his Baltimore neighborhood too. "I'm teaching them how to love their own situation through photography….I give kids cameras. They go out. I might not never see them again, but they have a piece of me with them."

Brittany Ferrell is a parent too. She said that she tweets and still remains active in the Movement, despite facing protest-related felony charges in St. Louis because:

> I am a mother. I have a soon-to-be 9-year-old daughter…I think a lot of times I look at the great sacrifice that it's going to take for black people to get free, and for her and so many kids like her, [and it is] so worth it. You know? We get to train them up in this Movement and let them know this is their life's work. So I let that guide my steps because I don't want this to be another situation where after our generation the ball is dropped again and then our youth are trying to pick up the pieces and figure out where do we go from here. I want this to be something that we pass down to her because it's going to be a constant struggle.

The realization that this work will be long-term is daunting to some, but not discouraging. In fact, it strengthens many participants' resolve to bear witness, to mark milestones that will keep future generations assured that progress is being made. Lincoln Mondy said, for example, "There's that aspect of me having to remind myself that this, unfortunately, might not happen in my lifetime. I think having that in mind in passing the baton off to my children in the future generation, and instilling the passion to be a trouble maker, and to get stuff done—but also making sure that they take care of themselves and making sure that they know that this isn't a short relay race—it's hard."

Regards. The activists intuit that their storytelling is as cathartic as it is oppositional. Many spoke of feeling led to report their version of the news out of "regards" or love for black people—even to heal historic wounds and make communities healthy again—in the same way that professional journalists speak loftily of their reportage as necessary for a healthy democracy. The activists also said that they provide

updates on the Movement to show love for queer-affirming spaces, for self, and, to a lesser degree, for one's enemies.

Love for black people. Alicia Garza (2015) reminded me in our interview that the Black Lives Matter Movement began as a love letter to African Americans. "We really wanted to focus on making sure that black folks were getting organized and that we were grounded in the principles of love for ourselves, love for each other, love for humanity, and also that we were grounded in the principles of building power for our collective liberation," she said.

Garza used words such as "collective" and "unified" when she spoke of her ultimate goals for what she established with her co-founders. She talked about "making visible folks who feel invisible." She added, "I've been that person before, that felt isolated, that felt weird and like an anomaly because I'm one of the only black folks in a space. And so it feels really good to come together and love on each other and encourage each other to hold our heads high."

Eve Ewing spoke of her love for her news audience and storytelling partners on Twitter. "I definitely feel a sense of community and fellowship with other black people on Twitter, especially black women on Twitter. I also think that the black media maker space on Twitter is really special and a lot of us know each other in real life or have relationships with each other."

Love for queer-affirming spaces. I noted priorly in this chapter that some activists asked that I disclose and/or emphasize their sexual orientation, to end the historic erasure of queer activists' contributions to black social movements. These activists spoke often

123

about the love they have for those who are marginalized three times over, as black, female, queer leaders. Brittany Ferrell explained that Millennial Activists United actually formed to nurture women who self-identified this way.

> I began to notice that people began looking for this charismatic male leader. They romanticized the early Civil Rights Movement. They were looking for their Malcolm [X] or their Martin [Luther King, Jr.]…If you are not that then you are not worth listening to. You are not worth leading. You know, we had a lot of young people, a lot of queer people, and a lot of women who were doing so much work that was not being recognized. Their work was not being taken seriously, but it was the work that we felt like a lot of men got the credit for…We wanted to create a space for young people regardless of your identity and regardless of your gender, your sexuality, if you are ready to do this work for black lives, this is your space. So we wanted to open that up so people could feel safe coming into this with their whole selves, not to feel like they have to fit in anybody's box.

When I asked what resistance she has met due to self-identifying as a queer leader, Ferrell shook her head slowly. At best, she said, black male leaders within the Movement have called her "divisive" for highlighting their sexism—especially in terms of hoarding media opportunities or only doing certain kinds of work. At its worst, Ferrell said she has experienced vehement opposition from other black activists who believe her sexuality threatens the Movement's credibility. She said:

> When it comes to intersectionality…there are different people in this struggle where there blackness is intersecting with their sexuality [and] intersecting with their gender….So it's been a struggle for myself and other women in this Movement because a lot of times you can be labeled as divisive when calling out sexism, but it's our duty to do that. It's our duty to do that because all that's going to happen if we don't is people are going to recreate structures that are going to continue to marginalize people: women, queer people, trans folks.

Ferrell met her wife, Alexis Templeton, while protesting in Ferguson. I asked how they maintain love in a Movement, when history has shown that so many activists have been unable to do so. She sighed deeply and gazed out of the window of her car. We were on FaceTime, and she was sitting in her vehicle before entering the building to go to work. Her voice cracked:

It has its own set of trauma honestly. We were forged in the fire. So it's a lot that we talk about that we've waded through, from what has happened in this Movement. But I can definitely say that because of this experience, it's a love that has never really felt like any other love that I've ever experienced. Knowing that somebody is so committed to something in the same way that you are and that they are on this journey to make sure that they're whole and they're healthy in the same way that you are—it's something very powerful about the type of love that Alexis and I have grown into during this Movement.

Love for "self." Ferrell spoke of her daughter often in our interview too. Not only is Ferrell teaching her to love black people; she said she is training her daughter to love herself too. "She needs to grow up in this and to learn what it means to live as your whole self, your true self, and to love radically, and to fight for freedom, and to really walk in this purpose of your commitment and love to black people," Ferrell said. She added, "I think that she has kept my feet to the fire. She has kept me constantly evaluating how do I do this work in the most transformative and honest and radical but tender way?"

Devin Allen is rearing a black girl too. He said he never really paid much attention to legacy media's standards of beauty until she was born. Now, he uses his photographic witnessing to capture various versions of black beauty, so he can share it with her. "I'm raising a daughter,' he said, smiling. "We're constantly being tormented about our skin tones—this light skin versus dark skin thing—these are things that media is constantly portraying."

He leaned forward in his chair and continued, "We've been taught not to love ourselves. That's the thing. It's always something wrong. Our hair too thick. Our nose too big. It's like this reverse thing where they want to make us uncomfortable in our skin so that they can jump in it."

Allen points to his Afro. He said, "It's like, for instance, my hair. I was told, 'Oh my God, I love your hair. It's so intimidating.' Is that a compliment? Are you intimidated by my hair?…I want people to see my photography, [and] make people comfortable with my skin."

Love for perceived enemies. To a lesser degree, some participants talked about having love for their perceived enemies, which include Internet trolls or warring political parties. Mark Luckie said that when he transitioned from life as a tech executive to become an outspoken voice on race, he experienced a lot of online harassment. "People said things like, 'I follow you for journalism. Why are you talking about black people all of the time?' or 'Diversity is stupid. You're stupid,'" he recalled. Luckie said he was ready for the pushback, however, adding, "I say there is no gray area. If you are not going to commit to this fully, then you should not get involved. I joke all of the time and say that there is probably an FBI file on me somewhere because of the things I tweet and the fact that I have been to the White House several times for various events. I am okay with that, in knowing that I am trying to connect with my community."

Some members of the Movement criticized Brittany Packnett when she publicly endorsed Secy. Hillary Clinton in this Presidential election cycle. There was scuttlebutt amongst Movement leaders about which Democratic candidate deserved the support most. (Alicia Garza, for example, conducted an interview with Melissa Harris-Perry for *Elle*, in which she said she would *not* support Clinton).[26] When Packnett tweeted her

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[26] *See*: http://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/news/a37416/alicia-garza-black-lives-matter-hillary-clinton/.

choice on Oct. 21, 2016, therefore, mixed reactions followed.[27] I asked her who she envisioned her audience was when she tweeted that news update. She spoke in terms of love for her enemies that trolled her that day:

> You know I feel like I'm talking to anybody who's willing to listen and willing to engage. But I see everybody—including the folks in the White House that I don't think should be there—as God's children. So for me, the foundation is that I'm doing this out of a sense of duty towards love and justice. That none of us are perfect but all of us are sinners saved by Grace because God loved us that much and so therefore we need to love ourselves and one another that much to fight for justice.

Regret. The final line of questioning that attempted to assess the activists' intuition of their work as protest journalism involved inquiries about regret. Just as bell hooks asserted that gazing while black historically was a crime punishable by death, I sought to ascertain if the witnesses I interviewed had experienced any symbolic death in looking. Said differently, did they regret peering into the verboten? Only one activist triggered the "regret" code—the sole participant who did see herself as a protest journalist, ironically. Marissa Johnson said that she knew what she was getting into when she usurped Sen. Bernie Sanders's platform to deliver her message, but she did not anticipate the long-term effects it would have on her psyche and her career prospects. She said:

> I'm really happy about what we were able to contribute to history and trying to advance the people's agenda forward. That being said, had I known what it would cost me personally, I don't know that I would've. I'm not at that point yet where I would say, "Yeah, I would have still done it," knowing what I know now 'cause I lost a lot for a long time as a result of that moment. In terms of mental health, PTSD in particular…Once you do something like that and you're that connected publicly, it limits your career options. Which is cool now that I have my own business, so it's cool but you know? It colors everything you do and colors your legacy besides the fact that physical and government surveillance is always on the table for you…I've always been kind of a do-gooder so I never would have imagined that I would go viral for something that was so controversial versus

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[27] *See*: https://mobile.twitter.com/mspackyetti/status/789594278997663748.

going viral and people are like, "Oh, it's a funny video" or "Oh, she did this thing." It's like, no you go viral and hella people hate you and think you're a horrible person. That's just a thing you have to process and you have to deal with.

Empathy. The third element of my phenomenological inquiry investigated how the anti-police brutality activists viewed their bodies in relation to the world. For example, I wanted to know whether they saw themselves in the body of a dead black man or woman who has been gunned down by police. Their responses to this line of questioning triggered the "reflection," "requiem" and "risk" codes.

Reflection. Only one of the participants did say that he began reporting Movement news because, "It could have been me." Samuel Sinyangwe, one of the Day 1's, explained:

> I used to literally stop at 7-Eleven every day and get a sweet tea—Arizona Sweet Tea and some Starburst or some Skittles and walk home—and so seeing Trayvon get killed and the system refuse to hold Zimmerman accountable, I think, was very personal to me in the sense that that was about 15 minutes away from where I lived. It was like I could've been Trayvon. Trayvon could've been my little brother. In that way I think it made this issue very personal and that's what put me on this trajectory to really be thinking more deeply about police violence and the way that the system enables that to happen.

Sinyangwe was an outlier, however, in that most of the other interviewees were more likely to see themselves reflected in their hometowns. This was an unforeseen twist in the narrative. In many interviews, the beleaguered city itself became a character in the story—a character that loomed larger, oftentimes, than the mediated victim of police violence. While the killing of an unarmed black man, woman or child certainly served as a tipping point in many participants' minds, they said, they were more likely to speak up empathically on behalf of the African Americans who are still *alive*, and still facing oppressive conditions in their local communities.

Brittany Packnett described her response when Michael Brown died: "I was actually in Kansas City. I had just given a speech to a girls' conference of high school-aged girls, giving that message that educators give all the time, to be confident and bold, and to prepare themselves for leadership one day."

As Packnett drove back home to St. Louis later that day, she said she felt an overwhelming sense of heartbreak for her birthplace:

> I went to high school in Ferguson. Ferguson is home for me and I've always been very active in my community. When I saw what was going on at home that activism just grew. I could not *not* do something. I could not *not* take action in my own community—especially when they were facing the type of terror that they were from the police and the trauma. It was like trauma on top of trauma. It was the message that they sent to the many people who had to witness Mike Brown laying in the street for four-and-a-half hours. It's people coming into your community and profiting off of your trauma.

Devin Allen said he will never leave Baltimore to bear witness elsewhere, for similar reasons. He said he is invited to photograph protests in other cities and he always declines. "I can't spread myself too thin," he said, adding, "That's why everything I do is Baltimore-based. I created something, but if I leave it's going to be that gap. I feel like Baltimore needs me."

Requiem. The participants demonstrated that they intuit their bearing witness as a form of "requiem" or mourning. In fact, the act of crowdsourcing information in one's community on Twitter or by cellphone created a sense of solidarity during the turmoil, they said. "When Mike Brown got killed, I think the first thing that I saw was a picture," Brittany Packnett recalled, adding, "I can't remember if it was on Twitter or Instagram, but it was Mike Brown's step-dad. He had written on a piece of cardboard, 'Ferguson

Police just killed my unarmed son.' And I posted it, and reposted it, and then I started to follow along with what was happening."

Dread Scott said that his flag actually had been one year old when the back-to-back killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile occurred. He said he believes people began contacting him anew as a means to grieve collectively.

> I think the killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile happened right in sequence, which is actually what made A Man Was Lynched By Police Yesterday something that became of public discourse. The work was actually about a year old at the time these murders happened. The videos actually wrench people's hearts. People were very torn up by seeing that. The artwork in that context contributed to people saying, 'We're not going to just take this anymore.' The videos have helped increasing numbers of people see the depth of the problem, but left to its own it's just going to be sort of like lynching photos, where those were used by white people to celebrate a job well done and towards black people to terrorize us. Now, I don't watch every single one [cellphone video], but I think it's important to bear witness.

When I asked activists if the proliferation of frontline witnesses' videos desensitize them to police brutality issues, the answer was a resounding 'no.' Clint Smith said he even wrote a book, *Counting Descent*, to serve as a reminder to mourn the dead as names and not numbers: "I was not becoming numb to the deaths of the countless array of black boys and girls dying at the hands of police. For me it was a reminder that these people have names, and they have parents, and they siblings, and they existed beyond the circumstances that led to their death."

Smith said that he posts his poems on Twitter as a place to encourage collective grief. One of his most popular pieces, "How to Make a Cardboard Box Disappear in 10 Steps," garnered hundreds of "shares" on the platform, as it recounts all of the prominent Black Lives Matter rallies of 2015.[28]

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[28] *See*: https://twitter.com/ClintSmithIII/status/659003619887443968.

Shellonnee Chinn, who still is battling her former employer in court, said that Twitter helps her mourn her past life as a teacher and keeps her fight relevant. "That is the true power of social media. That's what I believe," she said, adding, "I would have been probably depressed on the couch somewhere not being able to communicate to you what happened because no one would be there to listen.…They don't see us as individuals or human beings. That's why social media allows us to have a face and a name." Devin Allen echoed this sentiment, of honoring victims' names. He said:

> …All of the people that we're fighting for, from Sandra Bland to Freddie Gray to Tamir [Rice] to—it's so many of them. [We must] make sure we keep their names alive. Make sure we tell our kids. Make sure we make them aware. My daughter was six when she shot her first protest. I took her. It was cold as hell. I'm out there freezing, like, 'You ready to go?' She was like, 'No, I need to get some more pictures.' She was in awe. She knows about Freddie Gray. She knows about these things.

Risk. The final narrative thread of intuition centered around how the activists view their bodies as objects of risk when they bear witness. Every activist shared stories of receiving death threats through various means, be it by email, Twitter, cellphone, or in person. One witness, Attorney Chris Stewart, even travels with a security detail when he appears in court for high-profile police brutality cases. He explained, "You have to be prepared for the lunatics, the threats against you, all that stuff. Now when I take these cases, most of the time I have private armed guards with me, so that's not fun."

Risk of bodily harm. Samuel Sinyangwe described an eerie telephone call he received just before the 2016 Republican National Convention commenced:

> The FBI showed up at my door one day before the RNC Convention and I wasn't home, so I get a call from a no-caller-ID number and they're like, 'Is this Samuel Sinyangwe?' I'm like, 'Yes,' and they're like, 'Well, this is—' I forget his name. 'Something with the FBI—FBI district office—San Francisco and I'm at your door, but you're not home so I'm leaving my business card under your door, but we want to talk to you about your plans for the RNC Convention, and I want to

encourage you not to go.' I was like, 'What? You're trying to tell me not to go?' First of all, I didn't have any plans…Then they're like, 'Well, we also want to talk to you. Can you come down to our office?' I was like, 'I'll get back to you about my schedule.' I ain't going in for questioning, so I didn't go in, and they didn't reach out to me again, so that was scary.

Sinyangwe said hackers also have doxed his accounts and posted his home address on Twitter. I asked Sinyangwe if there were ways that he and his colleagues have learned to protect themselves from surveillance. He confirmed that they use their smartphones in different ways now that they have become more prominent activists. Without giving away their exact techniques, he spoke of using certain mobile apps that encrypt document shares and text messaging. He also said that he rarely tweets with Twitter's geolocation feature activated, to avoid real-time tracking of his whereabouts. "I just assume that we're all being surveilled at this point. We try to do what we can do to make it harder to monitor our activities," he said. He added that he tries to remember that his work as a data scientist distances him, to a degree, from the threats of bodily harm. "My work is not as hard as every single day being in the streets. I'm crunching numbers. I'm doing reports. I'm meeting with legislators, but I'm not getting tear-gassed while I'm doing that. There's a privilege associated with that that keeps me grounded. It could be 10 times harder," he said.

Brittany Ferrell likely would agree. She was on the frontlines in Ferguson. She *has* been tear-gassed: "I felt like I didn't know if I would make it home at night [during the protests]. There was so much happening every night. There was the police that were shooting rubber and wooden bullets at protestors and tear-gas. There were gun shots that were being let off. There were dogs. There was fire. There was so much. And it was like

we almost became inured to the fact that we might be harmed physically…we still went out night after night after night," she said.

Marissa Johnson said she brought white allies with her when she interrupted Sanders at the podium to form a human barricade between her and the audience. She said she does not think she would have made it to her car without them after she finished her speech. They could not protect her from the aftermath, however. She explained, "I've gotten thousands of death threats. I still do, a year-and-a-half later. Every time something would happen in the [Presidential] election again, I'd get new death threats."

Johnson emphasized that her experiences are not unique. She said: "If you're doing effective work, that's what's on the table. If you're afraid of that to the extent that you're not going to do that kind of stuff, then you end up doing work that's less revolutionary. The tactics that we chose—if you're really aware of the legacy of people who take that road—then you understand that everything up to death is on the table."

Risk of mental trauma. Eve Ewing said not all of the risks are bodily. Some are psychic. She spoke at length about the mental toll that viewing videos of police shootings has taken on her. She said that she found it offensive when news outlets or even other black witnesses would post videos of black death online without a disclaimer or an opt-out method. She said:

> I've been very vocal about pushing news media outlets to not have auto-play videos because there have been times—like when Philando Castile was killed—that I'm reading an article and then I scroll down and this video starts playing that I didn't consent to watching. [BLM activist] Shaun King is somebody that very frequently posts these things. I've publicly said to him, I wish you wouldn't do this—people have asked you not to do it—I'm asking you not to do it.[29] I used to know people that really made me feel like if I didn't watch videos of black

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[29] *See*: https://twitter.com/eveewing/status/778013457971118080.

people dying then I didn't care or that I was somehow sheltering myself from reality when in fact I think that we vastly underestimate the trauma that we endure by watching videos like that and also we overestimate the degree to which those videos actually make a difference.

Ewing went on to say that she has sent private, direct messages (DMs) to other Twitter users to ask them to remove police shootings of African Americans from their main Twitter feeds that anyone can encounter while browsing casually. "When the Sandra Bland video came out I was very public about saying, on Twitter, I cannot watch this right now…and so many people responded…just affirming and saying you don't have to do anything that is unsafe for you emotionally, or saying thank you for saying that because in you saying that I now realize that I have permission to care for myself."

Ewing linked the trauma of the black gaze to that of Emmett Till, in the way that I posited black witnesses begin most of their references to black bodies at risk. She said, "I, like probably a lot of us, remember the first time I saw Emmett Till's face as a kid. That is burned in my memory forever. I went to his [Till's] mother's funeral when she passed away—she had a huge funeral here in Chicago—and I thought about the sacrifice that she made. I learned that at a very young age."

Some mental trauma occurs offline too, in the real world, Brittany Ferrell said. She recalled the first time that it happened. She was out running errands when an unmarked car drove up to her, and "a white man with a camera leans out of the passenger side window and starts snapping photos [of me]," she said. She explained, "This is a Movement that they know we are winning. This is not just a *moment* for us. This is a very real black Movement and people are kind of doing what they have to do to make sure

they can smolder this…There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about who's listening, who's watching. I've become inured to feeling like safety is an illusion."

Ferrell said that the cameraman has become a fixture in the days leading up to her March 2017 sentencing date. When I inquire about the charges against her, she said a woman drove through a crowd of Black Lives Matter protestors who had blocked off I-70 in St. Louis to commemorate the one-year anniversary of Michael Brown's death in August 2015. "[She] used her vehicle to try and run protestors over," Ferrell said as tears began to brim in her eyes. She added, "I allegedly struck her driver's side door with my size 6 shoe and now I'm facing a felony. It's definitely political retaliation towards the Movement. It's definitely an effort for them to make an example out of me."

Ferrell remarked that her felony charge is made all the more bitter when she considers the fact that:

> The same prosecutor who failed to prosecute Darren Wilson for murdering Michael Brown is the same prosecutor charging me with this felony…When I first went to court, I had another prosecutor on the case. Somehow they said that my case was too atypical, so they passed it to [Robert] McCulloch. So now I am having to really process what that means. You know? The same prosecutor who failed to indict [Officer] Darren Wilson [for killing Michael Brown] is now trying to convict me of a felony for allegedly kicking a vehicle.

Ferrell eventually was given a suspended sentence and granted probation as part of a plea deal in March 2017.

Intersubjectivity. Finally, I sought to determine how the activists believed their individual work as black witnesses impacted the broader Black Lives Matter Movement. Their responses triggered the "retrospect," "redemption" and "religion" codes.

Retrospect. Many of the activists indeed perceive their work as documentarians of the Movement as part of a historic chain of black activism. The participants rattled off

names of Civil Rights Movement icons as if they were family members. Other participants said they deliberately channeled the aesthetics of black activists past in their "public transcripts" (Squires, 2002). In doing so, they created retrospective glances to acknowledge their roots.

Looking back at past movements. Alicia Garza said that she and the co-founders of the Black Lives Matter Movement studied historic black activism and noticed a trend that they wanted to reverse. "As a black woman who is queer," she said, "I think one of the things that just feels important for us to understand, I think, historically, is that black women and women of color have been kind of the very foundation of what it's meant to get free, and then we're pushed aside or kind of erased. I guess my response to that is this is a moment where we can shift that, and I think what we're seeing is that we're watching old ways of being go away and new ways of being come in." I asked Garza how successful she feels she has been in this endeavor to highlight black women's social work —especially since legacy media often anoint DeRay Mckesson, an openly gay black man, the leader of Black Lives Matter. She shakes her head no, but her answer is very measured:

> It's certainly not perfect, but one of the things that we can continue to do is craft our organizations, our culture, our demonstrations, our Movement in way that not only makes visible the leadership and the work of women of color, and queer women, and trans women, and poor women, but that we also name what those contributions are. That we be very specific about what it is that we contribute. It's important for us to fight for our space without fighting each other.

Another retrospective motif that one of the participants conjured was that of the Civil Rights Movement-era "sit-in" demonstration. Marissa Johnson said when she looked out at the sea of furious faces during the Sen. Bernie Sanders rally, she felt:

> The utter and vile hatred that white folks have for you…It felt very emotional and it felt very spiritual to me in terms of having literally over a thousand angry, white people screaming at you, and you could tell in their voices, they hate you. They really hate you so much, and you're so inconveniencing them and their first thought when they are inconvenienced is violence. It was so similar to sit-ins in terms of what is somebody sitting at your [lunch] counter but inconvenience. In the grand scheme of things, as you really don't like black people, you don't want them there. White supremacy [has] such a violent, vicious, obviously irrational response…people threw trash at us.

Johnson went on to say that she understood why those who wanted to participate in sit-ins during the Civil Rights era had to endure practice protests first, in which their classmates and professors hurled epithets at them, to build their mental fortitude.

Looking back at past leaders. All of the participants I interviewed imagine themselves as receiving the metaphoric baton from an icon in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement or the Black Power Movement of the 1970s. Brittany Packnett explained:

> [I]t's the Black Power and Black Arts Movement that influenced me most. Late '60s and '70s folks like Kwame Ture and Gil Scott-Heron and Maya Angelou and Audre Lorde—people who took the foundations of the mid-century Civil Rights Movement and built something intentionally radical on top of it. They had an understanding of direct action and intellectual pragmatism….[T]hey also elevated a level of scholarship that allows us to talk about things the way that we do right now. So without an Audre Lorde you wouldn't have a Kimberlé Crenshaw. Without a Kimberlé Crenshaw we wouldn't be talking about intersectionality. Without a bell hooks, we wouldn't be talking about why the Women's March needs to be intersectional and include a womanist agenda.

Other activists echoed these sentiments, that Civil Rights Movement-era leaders inspire them most. When Marissa Johnson made the decision to interrupt Sen. Bernie Sanders, for example, she said she chose to don a T-shirt that read, "Fight like Fannie Lou [Hamer]," to commemorate the black woman's historically overlooked role in the Civil Rights Movement. She thought the shirt was particularly ironic too, insomuch as Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson interrupted Hamer's 1964 televised testimony to the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention. Just as Hamer began to recount the

beatings she sustained in police custody after she led black voter drives in her native Mississippi, Pres. Johnson preempted her speech with an unscheduled press conference. Marissa Johnson said this time *she* was doing the interrupting at the Sanders rally, in Hamer's memory.

Samuel Sinyangwe was the only activist who said that he channels an early 20th-century black activist. His idol, he said with a huge smile, is Ida B. Wells. He said he admires the fact that she was tabulating state-sponsored violence against black bodies long before the Internet made the aggregation of this data simple. He upholds her official report, *The Red Record* (1895), as sacrosanct. He said "She was doing something very similar in an earlier time where it was much harder to get access to the information and much harder to just exist in that space."

Redemption. In almost equal measure, the participants spoke of "redemption." They said that they hoped their reports humanized not only the slain, but also black protestors and the Movement itself. While few interviewees spoke directly about wanting to change the image of a particular victim of police violence, as I predicted they would, they spoke more commonly, instead, about using their reports to undo the casting of the Movement and its protestors as violent. I underestimated the degree to which this would be the case. In nearly every interview, the activists expressed either anger or disappointment that legacy media consistently failed to mention the source of their frustrations with their local police departments, opting instead for the images of fire, brimstone, and cops clad in riot gear. Along these lines, however, I was correct in assuming that the participants are media savvy enough to identify legacy news myths of

black criminality and black marginality. Although the interviewees did not use these phrases specifically, they consistently offered personal anecdotes of detecting racial disparities in news reportage. Moreover, they shared tales of overtly reporting in opposition to a legacy media report they considered problematic, to redeem the Movement and those who lead it most publicly.

Redeeming Black Lives Matter news frames. Many of the participants said that they believe the Black Lives Matter organization has not been disambiguated enough from the broader Black Lives Matter Movement in mainstream media. This creates a plethora of problems when it comes to reporting the major actors in a prominent campaign, Eve Ewing (2016) explained:

> It's a pet peeve of mine in the media when people call everything Black Lives Matter. One of the most egregious examples being referring to things that DeRay Mckesson does as being under Black Lives Matter when in fact they are extremely separate…it's really lazy reporting to be honest. Especially here in Chicago, Black Lives Matter Chicago is one organization and they work in partnership with other orgs, but they say all of the time, please don't credit us for things that Assata's Daughters did, or that We Charge Genocide did.

Brittany Packnett (2017) said that she tweets to inform the public about the coalitions that her organization, Campaign Zero, has formed with kindred groups in the Movement. She explained:

> We know that people have been mislabeling the Movement after one single organization, but we are a collective Movement. So, I often remind people that past black movements were the same way. We called it the Civil Rights Movement. Correctly so, but there were lots of organizations who had lots of different tactics, aims, leaders, and constituents. They were oriented towards the same goal: a goal of racial equity and freedom. Goals of economic empowerment. Goals of the American dream. Right? Where it's liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So in the same way that SNCC, SCLC and NAACP and Core and the Panthers all had different tactics—and maybe in some ways even had some different aims—they were all a part of a broader Movement. And that is exactly how Campaign Zero stands up with organizations like Black Lives Matter, the Black Youth Project, et cetera.

Some activists spoke specifically about efforts to report on the Movement to keep

its momentum alive. Marissa Johnson said that there may be a temptation to frame the

Movement as dead, since some leaders are not as visible as they were at its inception in

2013. She explained:

> People are like, 'Oh, whatever happened to the Movement?' And what they mean
> is, why aren't you protesting the same ways? Why aren't you confronting in the
> same ways? They are not understanding or acknowledging that people who have
> really decided to stick in this work, like myself, have moved on to other
> strategies that are more sustainable—especially in the era of Trump. A lot of
> work will be underground.

The final news frame that requires additional redemption, according to the

activists, is the singular organization's stated mission versus the broad Movement's actual

causes. This is a hot-button issue amongst the interviewees. While the Black Lives Matter

organization espouses 13 core principles on its website, not all activists agree with them

as listed.[30] Two participants, for example, said that the core mission should expand,

beyond anti-police brutality efforts, to include other areas that affect blacks

disproportionately. Eve Ewing explained:

> I think that education and education policy issues are very frequently
> underrepresented in conversations about the Movement for Black Lives and
> that's something that I push back on a lot. [A]nother example is undocumented
> students and undocumented status. A lot of people don't know that there are
> thousands of African immigrants living in the United States that are
> undocumented…thousands of Asian immigrants that are undocumented. That's a
> part of the narrative that doesn't always get told.

Lincoln Mondy (2016), who produced the documentary *Black Lives, Black*

Lungs, said that he tweets to revise the news frames of black health and police

brutality as mutually exclusive phenomena:

> …There's an interesting story that one of the interviewers in my documentary
> told and that was that they were handing a letter to President Obama to get him to

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[30] *See*: http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/.

> ban Menthol…but they had to cancel the press conference because there was another killing of a black man. They were supposed to go to Baltimore, but when that happened they had to cancel it and they felt almost silly just because they're like, 'Oh, we can't talk about menthol when we're being killed in the streets' but it's also like, why can't we? This is the same. You see what happened on your Twitter and your TV yesterday? That's what the tobacco industry's being doing for 50 years!

Mark Luckie, the former journalist-cum-Twitter executive, said that reporters more than likely have the best of intentions when they go out to cover a Black Lives Matter-related story or an urban uprising. They fall short, however, when they fail to do the background research that will give them the cultural competency to tell the story completely. He said (2016) , "I think the publications that are covering the Movement well, like the *Los Angeles Times* and *Buzzfeed*, have reached out to people who are an actual part of that community to report on what's going on. The organizations that are fishing for clicks are the ones that have tried to use people who really did not know much about those communities, and lost the trust of the readers. I have been in a lot of newsrooms. I have seen what works and what does not."

Redeeming black protestor news frames. Brittany Ferrell, one of the Day 1's, said that legacy news media have "done a very good job in portraying BLM overall as a hate group." When I asked her to elaborate, she explained how angry she was when she saw the coverage of the January 2017 Women's March, which convened in many cities to oppose the Presidential election of Donald Trump. She said:

> I feel like a lot of white women went out and they were like, 'Oh this march is peaceful'—and really putting the emphasis on peaceful. And it's like well, you know, our demonstrations were also peaceful, but when you see a sea of white women with pink vagina hats on their head, white women are not going to be met with the same type of aggression from police officers as a community of traumatized, torn black people who continue over and over and over again to be traumatized. To be told that we don't matter. To be in communities where we don't have food. We don't have jobs. We don't have nothing. White women had the audacity to emphasize how safe their protests were.

> And it's like of course they were. They're protecting you. No one's protecting us. So they use that and they frame this narrative about how this is peaceful, and this [BLM] is not. And it's like no, this is valued in society and we are not.

Ferrell said she believes that Twitter has helped the Movement recast its protestors as fighting for a specific cause that is not articulated often by legacy media outlets, she said. "The media did what they had to do to protect systems, so it's a certain language that they used, a certain fear mongering that they used when they try to describe the [BLM] protestors," she explained, adding, "We're violent and we're angry. We're rioters. We're looters. We're all of those. These are words that kind of shake up people to their core…It makes them want to distance themselves from this Movement." I asked Ferrell to elaborate on what she felt the news media failed to mention about Ferguson. She said:

> They [journalists] never once ever talked about how the police terrorized our communities and how they've come into neighborhoods—residential neighborhoods—and tear-gassed our homes. They never talk about how the police let their dogs out on protestors and said that we were animals and that they would shoot us dead…I do think that they framed [Ferguson] in a way so that people would look at this Movement and not understand it, or to think that it's violent or to think that we are not making progress when in fact that we are.

In addition to using Twitter to fill perceived gaps in legacy media reportage, some activists said that the platform has allowed them to share why they chose a certain method of political intervention—especially if it was polarizing or incendiary. Marissa Johnson, for example, said Twitter helped her explain why she felt interrupting Sen. Bernie Sanders, to eschew any notion of black respectability politics, was "genius," even though legacy media did not frame it as such initially. She said:

> They [journalists] would be like…'I don't think they thought that any of this would happen.' There was an implication just throughout all the writing that we didn't plan for the outcomes, that we just went up there and yelled and all this stuff happened out of it, which is cool, but that those weren't connected. That we weren't strategic about how we went about it…versus 'These women are fucking

geniuses. They planned for this.'…It's misogynoir and ageism, like we're just little girls and we just got mad, and we just yelled and other things happened to happen out of it. White supremacy in that moment could never conceive that we had intentionally crafted this plan.

Whereas Ferrell uses Twitter to counter the "angry-black-rebel-without-a-cause" news narrative, and Johnson tweets to contradict the "accidental rebel" trope, Dread Scott adds yet another layer to using Twitter to redeem one's political positionality as a BLM activist. He said that in an Information Age where editorials and news blur the lines, Twitter has helped him deliver news and views on the Movement in a space that did not pretend to be objective. "I think all journalists are partisan even though many would claim that they're not," he said, adding, "I think that journalism, it is still mostly reporting on what it purports to be facts…Art actually doesn't deal in fact but it doesn't have to. When I'm being manipulative, I'm open about being manipulative, whereas when Fox is being manipulative, they hustle you."

Religion. David Banner was the only activist to reject religion while conveying his take on intersubjectivity. He said organized Christianity has, and always will be, a hindrance to black people:

> Protesting is good, but only if you have a means to an end. We just go out and walk to protest, and don't really know what we want. I always ask people all the time, 'What are your demands?'" he said. He shook his head and added, "Because I don't believe in hope. I don't want nobody's hope. White folks don't believe in hope. They're building that Heaven right now…We want Jesus to come back and save us. We want [President] Obama to come back and save us. I don't believe in any of those…They're not coming. I personally believe that Jesus was the symbol that *you* could be a walking God.

Only two of the 15 participants said they believe they are doing "God's work." One participant, Brittany Packnett, is the child of two Christian ministers. Marissa Johnson is a former divinity student. Packnett referenced religion to describe her

143

childhood and the morals her parents instilled within her. She said: "My father was a pastor and a professor of black church history and black liberation theology. So my upbringing was very steeped in Afrocentric beliefs around community, around support, around understanding my history and the shoulders on which I stand." Packnett laughed and added that in her house, "I learned all three verses to [the Black American National Anthem] 'Lift Every Voice and Sing,' when I was a kid and had to know them from memory. This was not a game in my household."

Johnson was a bit more conspiratorial. She explained, "One of my influences is [the German Lutheran pastor and Nazi resistor] Dietrich Bonhoeffer because I'm a Christian. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was part of a collective who planned an assassination attempt on Hitler. [This was] a collective of pastors!" She continued, "If you're understanding what's happening in the United States and you understand fascism, then [you understand that] you don't resist in ways that are public. There are underground tactics that have to happen now. There were no protests to free the Jews [during the Holocaust]. That's not what happened. People had to create underground collectives in order to figure out how to break the law."

Other participants only made passing references to a higher power, as in believing that they had a "God-given talent" that they should share with their community. Ieshia Evans, for example, said, "I'm blessed that God decided to use me as a vessel to spread some type of awareness." Likewise, Devin Allen said the only reason he rose to such heights without formal training was because of God. "I didn't follow I guess the right, the traditional path of a photographer. I picked up a camera three years ago. I taught myself. I

used social media. Then I landed on the cover of *TIME*…I think that bothers them [professional journalists], like, 'I had to [work for] 20 years. I had to go to school, but this young black kid is doing all these amazing things.' That's my path. That's my God-given gift."

Results, Recapitulated

In summary, the narrative analysis of 15 activists' interviews attempted to answer the research questions: What is the lived experience of bearing witness while black? As one would imagine, the lived experiences of the activists are varied. Some are fighting on the frontlines, with eyes full of tear-gas. They challenge legacy media outlets from the trenches, correcting reports that they deem sensationalized or incorrect. They are the consummate fact-checkers who are on the scene, reporting live. Other activists are crunching numbers and filling in statistical gaps. They prepare data-driven reports that create new frames for the official reportage on police brutality. They are the investigative journalists of the bunch, yet they likely would eschew this title. Still other activists are tweeting bits of art, poetry and music that do the double work of providing news updates, and creating the visual and aural aesthetic for the Movement. They are the freelance cultural critics of the Black Twitter newsroom: the Stanley Crouch-esque columnists and essayists who articulate the Movement's raw emotions into 140-character snippets of meaning. All of these activists are unified in their belief that sharing news, on their own narrative terms, has the power to oppose negative media representations of blackness, black people, and black social movements. The activists intuit that their words and actions carry great responsibility. They speak loftily, as if they carry their cities and all

black people who have suffered at the hands of police, on their backs. At times, the psychic toll of such thinking has worn on many of them. Though they speak in terms of loving the cause and the afflicted very much, a few have strains of doubt that this lifestyle will be sustainable for them. One activist regrets joining the fray at all.

All of these black witnesses are united, as well, by the realization that safety is illusory, as each activist has received threats on his or her life. Some state this fact as if it is an activist's rite of passage, in very matter-of-fact terms. Others admit it reluctantly, as if the daily terrors of the work are better left unsaid. Many interviewees seem to feel that the threats are an indication that they are winning the long-term fight, however. This is important to them, as many activists have children that they are training up in the Movement. They feel that their descendants are depending on them. They are redeeming their stories, therefore, so that future generations know what they were fighting for, and what demands they made.

Chapter 5—Moments

"Writing as writing. Writing as rioting. Writing as righting. On the best days, all three."

—Teju Cole[31]

Like the soles on the shoes of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery "voting rights" marchers, the relationships between today's anti-police brutality activists are muddy—at best. I was reminded of this when a Google image query turned up a picture of James Baldwin, Bayard Rustin and Asa Philip Randolph perched atop a set of makeshift bleachers that look to be made only from raw, sagging plywood and staples.[32] Rustin sits in the center, clad in a suit and tie. Smoke from his cigarette unfurls over his shoulder. He balances a few sheets of paper on his knee as he pens some kind of note. At the left of him sits Baldwin in a moment of casual cool. He is wearing a partially unbuttoned checked shirt. His sleeves are rolled up to the elbow, as if he came to work. He is smoking too, and his unsmiling face seems to be gazing right back at the photographer behind dark shades. Randolph sits to the right of Rustin. He exudes elder statesman elegance. His legs are folded at the knee and a sharp fedora sits in his lap. The three men sitting together may not be all that remarkable at first glance. In a journalistic, *studium* sense, it is merely a visual record of event attendance. Barthes (1981) would say, however, that this photograph is brimming with *punctum*. A small detail catches one's eye

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[31] *See*: https://twitter.com/tejucole/status/454646310994710528?lang=en.

[32] *See:* Somerstein, S. F. (1965). Speakers Platform. *Getty Images*. Retrieved from: http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/459534210.

at the bottom of the frame. Baldwin's and Randolph's shoes are covered in mud. While

Rustin's feet are obscured in the photograph, it is assumed that his are soiled too. This

photograph was taken on March 25, 1965. It was the day that those brave enough to

march from Selma, Alabama to the state's capital of Montgomery finally arrived there.

The picture does not state whether the three men were listening to Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr.'s triumphant speech about the march's goal to win black voting rights in the

state. The photograph does underpin, however, the varied black identities that comprised

the Civil Rights Movement. This trio was as intergenerational as it was intersectional.

The anti-police brutality activists in this corpus are no less so. They seem to embody the

spirits of Baldwin, Rustin, and Randolph, in that they are keenly aware that photographic

staging of justice is as important as the march itself, and that identifying as queer and

black while leading a social movement is equal parts life-affirming, yet life-threatening.

This tangle, of identity, agenda-setting and careful negotiation of digital agoras versus

"safe spaces" (Collins, 1990), created many "muddy shoe" moments during the data

gathering phase of this study. When reviewing the Twitter timelines of the activists I

interviewed, a single small detail—in a photograph, hyperlink, or video—often led to

larger questions of time, place and the degree of connectedness between black witnesses.

I must admit that the researcher makes the data: things are remarkable because I

have made them thus. Codes and patterns are observed because I have come up with the

scheme of classification. I will be transparent, therefore, to explain how I devised my

systems of naming, sorting and highlighting black witnessing. It is my hope that while

this will not offer sweeping pronouncements of what *all* black activists do on Twitter, it

will be enlightening still to observe key moments or snapshots of journalistic activity that inspire further study. More specifically, these analyses helped me answer my remaining research questions:

RQ2: How do anti-police brutality activists use mobile devices to engage in sustained acts of black witnessing?

RQ3: How do anti-police brutality activists use Twitter as an *ad-hoc* news outlet to create and circulate protest journalism?

The Metrics

User-based and temporal metrics. User-based Twitter activity metrics offered insight into an activist's "commitment to the hashtagged exchange" and their online engagement with their followers (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013, p. 6). Specifically, I counted for each user: (1) the total number of tweets sent during the first six weeks of 2017; (2) the number of original tweets versus retweets; (3) the number of @replies sent, which address specific users, and (4) the number of "favorited" tweets. Temporal Twitter metrics focused on the discrete timeframe of data-gathering to depict bursts and lulls of group-level and individual activity. I quantified each user's individual average daily rate of tweeting during the first six weeks of 2017 for this metric.

Quantifying commitment. The most prolific Twitter user is one of our Day 1's, Brittany Packnett (@MsPackyetti), who posted 3,225 tweets between Jan. 1, 2017 to Feb. 15, 2017. She posted an average of 70 status updates every day during this timespan. When she is particularly inspired, she can tweet more than double her daily average. On the day of Pres. Trump's inauguration, Jan. 20, 2017, for example, she provided 161

updates. The day after that, as activists from various factions within the broader Black Lives Matter Movement dialogued about what his election might mean for their varied missions, she tweeted 201 times. Packnett's Day 1 ally, Samuel Sinyangwe (@samswey), is the second-most prolific activist, sharing 3,084 tweets between Jan. 1, 2017 to Feb. 15, 2017. He posted an average of 67 updates daily in this timespan. Like Packnett, his all-time high within the corpus coincided with Trump's assumption of office. He tweeted 255 times on Inauguration Day, but tapered off the day after, with only 88 tweets.

This alternating pattern of participation is worth exploring. Throughout the corpus, when Packnett's participation is high, Sinyangwe's is a bit lower on the same day. Then, on the following day, the inverse is true. For example, on Feb. 8, 2017, legacy media began to report that Trump made false claims about America's murder rate being at an all-time high.[33] The Day 1's engage in Sinyangwe's so-called "rapid response." Packnett tweeted 143 updates about why Trump's statistics were faulty on Feb. 8; Sinyangwe tweeted 92 updates. The next day, however, Sinyangwe picks up the baton, posting 104 total tweets that day, while Packnett posted only 44. I should note here that during these two days, the division of labor in terms of whom reported what is fascinating. Sinyangwe stuck to his role as investigative data scientist, churning out statistics to counter Trump's narrative of lawlessness in America's African American urban centers (Huston, 2017). But Packnett was busy too. She played the role of Capitol Hill correspondent, reporting through the smokescreen of Trump's news cycle distraction to the more pressing issues that week: the contentious Senate confirmations of Betsy

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[33] *See*: CBS News timeline, *Today in Trump*: http://cbsn.ws/2k2KCpo.

DeVos as Secretary of Education and Sen. Jeff Sessions as Attorney General. As Sen. Elizabeth Warren earned her now-infamous rebuke by the Senate for reading a letter from the late Coretta Scott King on the floor, which opposed Sen. Sessions, Packnett published a flurry of tweets that kept an eye on the legislative branch of government. Sinyangwe, meanwhile, attacked the executive branch's data. Both of the Day 1's said in the interviews that they took turns reporting so that no one burned out. Sinyangwe explained: "We were communicating on text chats and we're always interfacing back and forth about things…We're all in different places, so we're doing things virtually."

Eve Ewing, Devin Allen, and Marissa Johnson round out our Top 5 Twitter users between Jan. 1, 2017 to Feb. 15, 2017. Ewing (@eveewing) posted 2,833 updates, for a daily average of 62 tweets. Allen (@byDVNLLN) posted 2,304 updates, for a daily average of 50 tweets. Lastly, Johnson (@rissaoftheway) posted 1,467 updates, for a daily average of 32 tweets. By contrast, Alicia Garza (@aliciagarza), posted nothing at all. My three emails to Garza, which asked about her apparent abandonment of Twitter, went unanswered. However, my genre-based analysis of her Twitter timeline (which I summarize in forthcoming sections) indicates that she engaged in a disproportionate number of imbroglios online. This may have turned her away from the platform.

Shellonnee Chinn (@schinn) and Ieshia Evans (@ieshiaevans) started 2017 slowly, with only a dozen news updates between the two of them. In my interviews with both activists, they explained that they have started to share more of their updates on different platforms. Chinn said she created a Facebook page so that people could follow her federal trial.

Table 7—Activists' Twitter Habits (Jan. 1, 2017-Feb. 15, 2017)

Activist Name	Twitter Handle	Total tweets	Daily Average
Brittany Packnett	@MsPackyetti	3,225	70
Samuel Sinyangwe	@samswey	3,084	67
Eve Ewing	@eveewing	2,833	62
Devin Allen	@byDVNLLN	2,304	50
Marissa Johnson	@rissaoftheway	1467	32
Clint Smith	@ClintSmithIII	608	13
David Banner	@davidbanner	432	9
Mark Luckie	@marksluckie	356	8
Brittany Ferrell	@bdoulaoblongata	291	6
Dread Scott	@dreadscottart	112	2
Lincoln Mondy	@LincolnMondy	84	2
Chris Stewart	@chrisstewartesq	57	1
Ieshia Evans	@IeshiaEvans	10	0
Shellonnee Chinn	@sbchinn	2	0
Alicia Garza	@aliciagarza	0	0

She is calling it her "Casebook."[34] The platform allowed her to upload pertinent documents and audio files in an interface that is more static, she said. Facebook users do not have to scroll through months of Twitter updates now to find a media item, she explained further. Similarly, Evans said that her decline in average daily tweets—from one update per day in 2016, down to one per week in early 2017—is due to a migration to Instagram.[35] "I'm in my learning phases," she said, reiterating that she only recently

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[34] *See*: https://www.facebook.com/sbchinnlawsuit/.

[35] *See*: https://www.instagram.com/luvempress911.

joined in July 2016 after her participation in the Alton Sterling protests in Baton Rouge.

The user-generated content to pass-along ratio. Another measure of commitment

to the hashtagged exchange is expressed in the ratio of user-generated content to pass-

along content that each activist created and shared. User-generated content is that which

the activist appeared to have produced firsthand. Pass-along content is information that

was transmitted secondhand, either from a legacy media outlet or an ally in the

Movement. Less commonly, the activists passed along news from detractors of the

Movement, but only in terms of providing the background necessary to counter it. This is

a very important and nuanced designation to make because it reveals the nature of a

particular activist's witnessing. Samuel Sinyangwe, for example, is one of the Top 5 most

prolific Twitter users in the corpus. It may be tempting, at first glance, to dismiss his

productive Twitter timeline as merely rehashing legacy media news stories, since 81

percent of his updates are retweets. Sinyangwe used the retweet function, however, to

provide context for his firsthand reportage. Before he launched an assault on a faulty

statistic or a news myth, he tweeted links to news stories that have reported a story

incorrectly, then followed it with his analysis. It is his version of academic citation,

adapted for Twitter's discursive sphere. Aside from using the retweet function to cite

legacy media news stories in his analyses, Sinyangwe used it to side publicly with his

Day 1 colleague, Brittany Packnett. He most commonly retweeted her posts that suggest

specific policy changes.

Table 8—Retweets vs. Original Content

Activist	Total Retweets	Retweets (%)
Sam Sinyangwe	2,601	81%
Marissa Johnson	2,568	80%
Brittany Packnett	1,718	54%
Alicia Garza	1,613	50%
Devin Allen	1,577	49%
David Banner	1,345	42%
Eve Ewing	721	23%
Clint Smith III	694	22%
Dread Scott	682	21%
Mark Luckie	655	20%
Brittany Ferrell	393	12%
Ieshia Evans	352	11%
Lincoln Mondy	312	10%
Shellonnee Chinn	67	2%
Chris Stewart	61	2%

Marissa Johnson, who is a Top 5 Twitter user in our corpus, led the pass-along metrics with 80% retweets too. Johnson used the retweet function in the way it was imagined initially, however, to share news secondhand, although not from legacy news outlets. Johnson instead amplified the voices of local protestors who are tweeting live from a demonstration. In this manner, Johnson showed solidarity for those who were still engaged in frontline campaigns, even though she said that she has shifted her focus to more clandestine forms of organizing. Garza's Twitter timeline reflected a similar pattern before she left the platform, in that she formerly retweeted live news reports of Black

Lives Matter chapter protests around the country too, thereby centralizing organizational news. Aside from Sinyangwe and Johnson, the remaining Top 5 Twitter users in the corpus part ways in terms of shared retweet habits. While Brittany Packnett and Devin Allen both retweeted about half of the time in this snapshot corpus—54 percent and 49 percent, respectively—Eve Ewing did so only 23 percent of the time. Ewing devoted the majority of her Twitter use to the next metric: engagement.

Estimating engagement with @replies. When a Twitter user wants to speak directly to another user, the platform allows one to use the "@" symbol before a Twitter handle. Both users then receive instant notifications when the conversation is updated. A high number of @replies is "…an indicator of visibility because it acts as a measure of the extent to which other users have taken note of and gone to the trouble of replying to or mentioning the user" (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013, p. 6). Mark Luckie, one of our Rogues, is a top engager in our snapshot corpus. Nearly 42 percent of his 3,200 total tweets were devoted to speaking to another user directly. Eve Ewing and Clint Smith, the Bards, are the second and third most likely to engage in extended conversation with other users, respectively. Roughly 30 percent of their tweets were conversations with other users. This is noteworthy because both Ewing and Smith were not big retweeters in this limited corpus. For Ewing, only 721 of her most recent 3,200 tweets (as of Feb. 15, 2017) were RTs. For Smith, 694 of his most recent 3,200 tweets were RTs within the same timeframe. These statistics suggest that the Bards are the most likely within the corpus to report original news and opinions. Moreover, they are more likely to engage with the counterpublic, asking and answering questions.

Chart 2—Number of Direct @Mentions

Activist	Number of Direct "@Mentions"
Mark Luckie	1,256
Eve Ewing	914
Clint Smith III	889
David Banner	632
Lincoln Mondy	542
Alicia Garza	491
Brittany Packnett	291
Brittany Ferrell	249
Ieshia Evans	168
Marissa Johnson	159
Devin Allen	140
Sam Sinyangwe	121
Dread Scott	98
Shellonnee Chinn	57
Chris Stewart	43
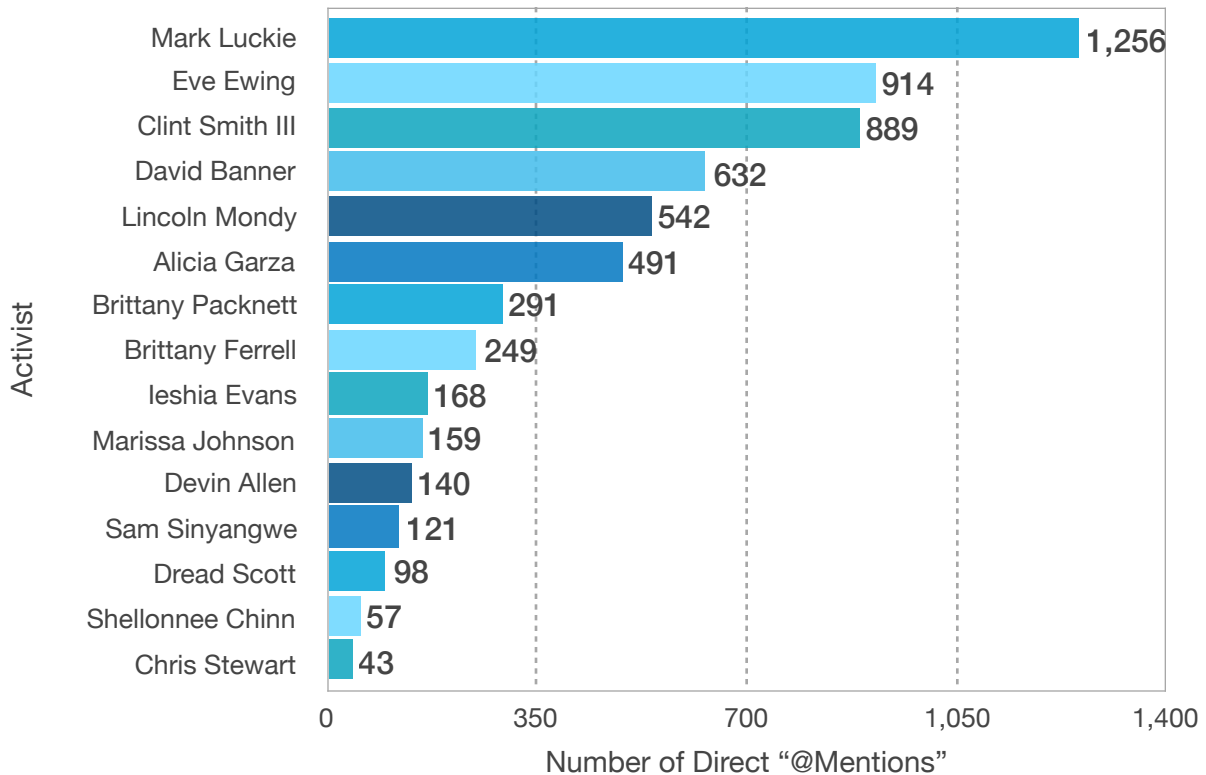
Another remarkable finding was the degree to which David Banner replied to his followers. Although he is a celebrity, 20 percent of his Tweets are replies, making him a Top 5 conversationalist in this cohort. Like his fellow Bards, Ewing and Smith, he reports from the frontlines and offers original commentary on the Movement too. The activist who is least likely to engage in conversation on Twitter is Attorney Chris Stewart. His professional code of conduct precludes it, he explained. He said: "I speak a lot on telling young lawyers how to use social media. You have to be aware of what you're doing and saying. You can't say a thing you wouldn't say in court. Whatever you say on social media, you'd better be able to back it up." He said that he tells his colleagues in the legal profession to avoid sensationalism on Twitter. "…When you're talking about a case,

don't just get up there making outlandish statements or anything like that to get more followers. I probably could have 50 million followers on stuff if I said flamboyant, outlandish stuff…but you know I kind of stick to the facts of the investigation as I can prove it."

Estimating engagement with favorites. The final metric of engagement is the "favorite" feature of Twitter. When users like a tweet that they have read, they can click a heart icon that appears underneath the tweet to indicate their approval of it. Like the @reply function, this metric is a measure of visibility, since users have to make an effort to read the tweet and decide whether they like it enough to let the author know that they do. Again, the Bards and the Day 1's led the cohort in engagement—this time in terms of "favorited" tweets. In this limited snapshot, Clint Smith had the most popular tweets. His most recent 3,200 tweets were "favorited" nearly 1 million times. The rest of the Bards and the Day 1's rounded out the list of the Top 5 most popular black witnesses in the cohort. Packnett's most recent 3,200 tweets garnered 236,449 favorites. Ewing's earned 229,593. Sinyangwe's accumulated 203,868. Banner's gleaned 44,252. Shellonnee Chinn's tweets ranked at the bottom of the cohort with 143 favorites. Stewart's professional commitment to tweet "just the facts" and Chinn's 2017 migration to Facebook may explain these low engagement levels.

Smartphone usage. We have quantified, heretofore, the frequency with which activists post to Twitter and their possible levels of engagement with their audiences. The final metric I quantified, however, was in service to (RQ2): How do anti-police brutality activists use mobile devices to engage in sustained acts of black witnessing? When I

coded my Twecoll query to Twitter's API, I asked it to retrieve the metadata that marked from which device or application the tweet originated. The results were intriguing: 83 percent of the 34,309 tweets in this snapshot corpus originated from Apple iPhone's native mobile application for Twitter. These data match Sinyangwe's claim that the iPhone is the activist's preferred method of communication, as it may offer unparalleled imperviousness to hacking and other security breaches. None of the tweets in the corpus were marked "Twitter for Android" explicitly. It is possible, however, that some of the tweets marked, "Twitter Web Client," "Mobile Web (M5)," or "Mobile Web (M2)" came from a mobile device that runs on the Android platform. Still, only 3,142 tweets (about 9 percent) of the total tweets in the corpus came from all three of these options, combined.

Also of note is the degree to which activists cross-pollinated content from social media platforms that are based on visual media. Instagram, which is a photo sharing platform, for example, is the third most popular application that activists used to publish news to Twitter. The witnesses in this cohort were 17 times more likely to push a picture from Instagram to Twitter than they were to use the iPhone's native camera app to upload to Twitter directly. This indicates that activists work to optimize their reach by syndicating their content in ways that are not unlike professional journalists. Just as a local newspaper reporter's story might run in their hometown paper first, then get picked up by the Associated Press for syndication in national publications, the activists broadcast simultaneously too. For video, they are using Periscope, a live-streaming app, to syndicate real-time footage to Twitter. They also leverage the app IFTTT, which creates

algorithms for sharing content across platforms. For instance, activists can use IFTTT to create a "rule" that states all Instagram pictures post to Twitter automatically.

In terms of other mobile devices, tablets still are not as ubiquitous as smartphones —only 657 of the 34,309 total tweets (roughly 2 percent) in the corpus originated from an Apple iPad. Still, this rate of adoption is nearly triple the rate at which the activists used Mac desktops or laptops to share news. Only 250 tweets, less than 1 percent of the total corpus of 34,309 tweets, came from the Twitter for Mac application. Lastly, the low adoption of third-party tweet "schedulers," such as Hootsuite, may indicate that the activists report more breaking news than they do "evergreen" stories.

The News Stories

I explored the Twitter timelines of each anti-police activist's most recent 3,200 tweets, from Feb. 15, 2017 to points backward, using the genre-based metrics I described in Ch. 3 and the black public sphere models I outlined in Ch. 1. First, I looked through each activist's timeline, searching for "muddy shoe" moments that emerged. I sought current affairs, references to Black Lives Matter chapters and affiliated organizations, and "blacktags" (Sharma, 2013) that highlighted slain victims of police brutality. After I tagged a tweet of interest for further inquiry, I attempted to ascertain the intended audience for the tweet: either the enclaved "in-group" of anti-police brutality activists and their imagined supporters, or the "counterpublic" of would-be converts to the cause. Additionally, I looked for evidence of a black "satellite" public sphere.

Table 9—Tools of the Trade

Twitter Access Method	Number of Uses	Number of Uses (%)
Twitter for iPhone	28,647	83.5%
Twitter Web Client	3,021	8.81%
Instagram	1,058	3.08%
Twitter for iPad	657	1.91%
tweetdeck	345	1.01%
Twitter for Mac	250	0.73%
tweetbot for iOS	236	0.69%
Mobile Web (M5)	107	0.31%
Camera on iOS	60	0.17%
IFTTT	49	0.14%
Photo on iOS	46	0.13%
Periscope	18	0.052%
Mobile Web (M2)	14	0.041%
Twitter QandA	14	0.041%
iOS	13	0.038%
Twitter for Websites	9	0.026%
Buffer	7	0.020%
Twitter Engage for iPhone	5	0.015%
GifBoom App	4	0.012%
Medium	3	0.009%
affinitweet.com	1	0.003%
Apple Music	1	0.003%
Hootsuite	1	0.003%
Mobile Web	1	0.003%
Product Hunt	1	0.003%
Spotify	1	0.003%
Thunderclap	1	0.003%
Vine	1	0.003%
YouTube on iOS	1	0.003%

My coding scheme adapted Dann's (2010) model, which included five groups of content: (1) conversational, (2) pass-along, (3) news, (4) status, and (5) phatic. I added the "imbroglio" category, to reflect the varied forms of online conflict. The revised Twitter timeline coding scheme had six categories and 29 sub-levels (Table 4). The "status" and "phatic" groups contained very little news reportage. Instead, this is where the stream-of-consciousness-style tweets resided, giving readers a glimpse into the lived experiences of bearing witness while black. These tweets facilitated "trace interviews," (Dubois & Ford, 2015) where I asked questions about specific tweets to gain a deeper understanding of a subject's phenomenology.

The activists' news reports resided, instead, in the remaining categories. News reports developed in an enclaved phase, through pass-along and conversational tweets. As the stories became formed more fully, it passed to the counterpublic phase, through news and imbroglio tweets. (Evidence of a satellite black public sphere did not emerge within this limited corpus of 34,309 tweets.) The anti-police brutality activists engaged in three internal reporting steps for an enclaved audience: (1) observation, (2) discussion, and (3) authentication. Additionally, they practiced three rituals for their counterpublic audience: (4) production, (5) publication and (6) agitation. These six phases propose a model of the workflow of mobile-mediated black witnessing (Table 10). This next section outlines what form news took at each of these steps.

Table 10—The Six Steps of Black Witnessing

Audience	Performative Step	Genre-based category	Sub-level
Enclave	Observation	Pass-along	headlines referral
	Discussion	Conversational	call-to-action coalition
	Authentication	Conversational	retweet inquiry
Counterpublic	Production	News	location solutions
	Publication	News	live temporal
	Agitation	Imbroglio	anti-alt-right anti-Dems

Bearing Witness While Black: The Enclave

As I noted in Ch. 1, not all black counterpublics are readily visible. Some spaces are hidden from the view of an oppressor since its members often possess, "few material, political, legal, or media resources," yet desire to "preserve culture, foster resistance [and] create strategies of the future" (Squires, 2002, p. 458). To the degree that Twitter allows privacy in its public platform, I did find this to be true. Twitter is, indeed, public-facing and searchable, yet the activists have learned to exist behind a veil in the early phases of their reportage by leveraging the site's architecture. Twitter's hashtag function allows users to find news topics, *a posteriori*. If an activist was not ready to share a news peg widely, therefore, she or he engaged in a series of pass-along or conversational tweets that were harder to track in real-time, unless one's eye is trained directly on their

timelines. Additionally, activists have learned to leverage the site's direct message (or DM) feature to conduct private conversations within Twitter. All of these practices occur within the first three phases of black witnessing via Twitter: observation, discussion, and authentication.

Observation. The first phase of the black witnessing workflow is observation. Usually, someone from the "in-group" of activists identifies breaking news on Twitter. Sometimes this looks like a retweet of a legacy media news headline, at the local or national level of coverage. At other times, the initial "burglar alarm" (Zaller, 2003) came from in-group referrals; word-of-mouth news that makes its way online into the activists' *ad-hoc* newsroom. In either case, the activist who makes the observation usually passes the news peg along to his or her followers, and allows allies to discuss it before launching a full-scale story. At this phase, I observed many threads of conversation on specific stories, where activists asked each other questions and evaluated the veracity or framing of a piece. I offer a few exemplars here, according to the genre-based sub-level under which the performative step occurred.

Headlines. Samuel Sinyangwe commonly uses existing news headlines to begin his original news reportage. He is the most prolific "retweeter" of the corpus and a top spot news reporter. The Stanford University-trained data scientist attributed a tally of people who had been detained as a result of Pres. Trump's travel ban as such: "RT @igorvolsky: Trump's deportation force: CA: 160 people detained GA: 26 people detained MN: 9 people detained VA, NY, OK, FL: increased…" Igor Volsky's (@igorvolsky) Twitter biography states that he is the Deputy Director for CAP Action, a

163

news site that is backed by the Center for American Progress Action Fund. In this manner, Sinyangwe alerted his audience that the information he passed along was from a third-party news medium. Then he got to work to verify those numbers, he said, tapping into open source databases and calling colleagues around the country to assess the scale of the ban. Sinyangwe was ready, then, to counter Trump's Jan. 30, 2017 tweet, in which the President claimed: "Only 109 people out of 325,000 were detained and held for questioning. Big problems at airports were caused by Delta computer outage" (Shabad, 2017). Sinyangwe retweeted Volsky's statistics, which he corroborated, then retorted: "The same system that allows police to kill with impunity is allowing border patrol to defy the courts and the FBI to pick the President."[36] In this manner, headlines can be the first step in identifying emergent news that is relevant to the anti-police brutality Movement. To make the narrative link between Black Lives Matter and the Muslim ban, however, activists first discussed a news headline to assess its merit.

Referral. The activists do not rely always on established headlines for news tips, however. I observed that members of the activists' news audience sometimes pass on ideas or local issues to the activists in the corpus, thereby serving as potential sources. When this happens, the activists tend to refer the audience member to an enclaved discursive space. A user contacted Alicia Garza directly on her timeline, for example, to ask for assistance to highlight a new cause. Garza tweeted to the user, "@tdowlats can you send me an email with more details? alicia@domesticworkers.org." Garza offered no comments about how she communicates with organizers offline in the interviews, but her

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[36] *See*: https://twitter.com/samswey/status/826107034907058177.

referral to an email outside of Twitter suggests that she is aware of the platform's public nature. Fellow Black Lives Matter activist, Marissa Johnson (@rissaoftheway), offered this explanation in her semistructured interview: "Some people are really paranoid and have this sort of like, 'Don't post anything on [social media] because the feds are watching, blah blah blah' and I'm like 'The feds are watching my whole life.' I'm thoughtful in certain ways but I don't assume that any communications that I have are secure." Many activists begin their discussion of news topics in as much obscurity as the site allows. This means that the activists situate their Twitter updates *a priori*, so that one must know to look for it in order to view it. This is achieved either by mentioning another user directly in conversation with the "@" function or asking them to engage in conversations offline. Additionally, activists seem to eschew the use of blacktags this early in the workflow, saving this system of classification instead for finished pieces that are to be located *a posteriori*.

Discussion. The second phase of the black witnessing workflow is discussion. After a news headline or in-group referral sounds the alarm on a potential news story, the activists began to converse about next steps internally with a series of "@" replies and DMs to each other. This is where the lines between *organizing* protests and *reporting* on protests blurred for many of the study's participants. Prominent leaders in the corpus summoned the Movement's supporters and allied organizations to wage a campaign. These same activists then began to craft the narratives that traveled outside of the enclave to the counterpublic.

Call-to-action. The Women of Black Lives Matter tweeted many of the "call-to-action" invitations for Twitter followers to mobilize offline, in real life. This is, perhaps, because they have the infrastructure to do so in the form of global chapters. Many of the invitations were for strategic planning meetings. Alicia Garza, for example, often served as an organizational hub for Black Lives Matter chapters everywhere, retweeting their calls to mobilize. She urged supporters to come to New York in this tweet: "RT @BLMNYC: Action tonight at Union Square at 5pm. Organized by our comrades @NYC_ShutItDown." Then Los Angeles here: "RT @BLMLA: #OccupyLACityHall: 8am meditation circle, 11am anti-poverty collective + more...Main St. bw 1st & Temple. #FireBeck." Likewise, Garza attempted to corral supporters for Black Lives Matter chapters in Chicago, Sacramento and Minneapolis, tweeting out the locations and times for rallies and informational meetings. Some swaths of her timeline, when many chapters are buzzing with activity, resemble a community calendar on a local television news website. She issues many calls to join campaigns in several cities, for dozens of slain victims who became hashtags. Garza publicizes fundraisers for local chapters too. In the aftermath of the Philando Castile shooting in July 2016, she asked, "RT @BLMChi: Help us fly Diamond's mom to be w/her daughter & granddaughter #PhilandoCastile."[37]

Coalition-building. When two or more allies in the Black Lives Matter Movement speak to each other directly or referred "traffic" to each other, I deemed this coalition-building. Activists talk to each other about what resources were available to engage in a particular protest, then divide their news production labor. Devin Allen does this often in

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[37] *See*: https://twitter.com/BLMChi/status/751070414328049664.

the corpus since he is a Master of Agitprop, but not a formal member of an anti-police brutality organization. His Twitter timeline reveals that he worked closely with Baltimore BLOC, a nonprofit group in his hometown. He amplified the group's initial tweet on Jan. 26, 2017, for example: "RT @BmoreBloc: If you know any immigrant or refugee in need of support here in #Baltimore, please connect with us. #RefugeesWelcome."[38] Two weeks later, Allen had migrated to the counterpublic, tweeting live pictures of the travel ban protests in the city: "RT @BmoreBloc: Few hundred stood up against #ICE in Baltimore Today. Call to action had only a few hours' notice #NoBanNoWall."[39]

Authentication. The final step of enclaved black witnessing is authentication. The activists seem to move to a fact-checking phase once a news peg catches their eye and they marshal the resources to tell a news story. Sometimes the activists encouraged retweets of facts to which they are privy to see if a story had any merit. In other instances, the activists asked questions directly to other members within the in-group, for added clarity or to suss out hoaxes.

Retweets. Ieshia Evans seemed to court retweets when she issued an official press release about her July 2016 Alton Sterling protest photograph. As noted in Ch. 4, she created a Twitter profile to counter the fake account someone made in her likeness. Then, she issued the tweet: "My official statement https://t.co/dMbV0HEYCE #IeshiaEvans."[40] The press release contained several direct quotes from Evans and a media contact person. The post garnered 236 retweets. About a dozen people tweeted directly to Evans to thank

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[38] *See*: https://twitter.com/BmoreBloc/status/824652219211452416.

[39] *See*: https://twitter.com/BmoreBloc/status/830920989898833920.

[40] *See*: https://twitter.com/IeshiaEvans/status/753059394674393088.

her for her stand. Evans said she was able to move into the counterpublic as a result of this tweet, garnering invitations to bear witness on *CBS This Morning* with Gayle King, and for media outlets in England, Norway, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Inquiry. Activists sometimes asked for clarification about news pegs when their audiences brought items to their attention. For example, Dread Scott asked two users directly: "@SunsaraTaylor @SoulRevision @uniqueloves following what? What's going on that I should be following?[41] His audience informs him that a young, black activist (#EricSheppard) is trending on Twitter for stomping on an American flag. His followers want him to report on Sheppard's exhibition, since it is reminiscent of a work he created almost 20 years ago entitled, "What is the Proper Way to Display a US Flag?" Like Sheppard, Scott encouraged those visiting the exhibit to trample Old Glory, to remember the myriad injustices that have been meted out against black people throughout American history. Pres. George H.W. Bush called it "disgraceful" when it debuted, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported on March 16, 1989.

In another example, Eve Ewing asked her audience to weigh in on the findings of the 2017 US Department of Justice investigation into the Chicago Police Department (CPD). "Here we go https://t.co/qAq7oVLJD5," she began, adding a link to a local television news station's live feed of the Department's press conference. In the subsequent thread, she takes issue with the report's assertion that the CPD has a "few bad apples." She was activated here, and began publicizing news I did not see reported elsewhere. For example, she amplified a tweet from an allied organization in the

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[41] *See*: https://twitter.com/DreadScottArt/status/591725887462178818.

Movement as such: "RT @youth4blklives: Since the DOJ reported on CPD today, on unconstitutional abuses of power CPD is trying to cancel our public meeting & make it private." Once again, in this example, I observed that these exchanges are not hashtagged. The only coding scheme used is that of the "@" function to reply directly to a user. In this manner, the communiqué remains within the in-group, passing through the observation, discussion, and authentication steps, until it is ready to be pushed to the counterpublic phase.

Bearing Witness While Black: The Counterpublic

Whereas the enclave shelters its participants from the volatile outside world, the counterpublic deliberately ventures, "outside of safe, enclave spaces to argue against dominant conceptions of the group and to describe group interests" (Squires, 2002, p. 460). In Ch. 1, I posited that this emboldened black public sphere creates protest rhetoric, facilitates increased communication between the marginalized and the powerful, and distributes media that tout an unapologetically subjective point of view. Again, I found empirical evidence that supports these theories. When activists have gathered enough data or anecdotal evidence to move forward with a story, they usually engaged in the news production, publication and agitation steps in the black witnessing workflow.

Production. The news production process amongst the activists who choose to bear witness can be very transparent at times—especially during heightened controversy or crisis. The self-imposed "deadlines" can be very rapid, as Sinyangwe shared in the interviews. The witnesses seem to let audiences know two key things, therefore, before they begin extended reportage: their propinquity to the on-the-ground campaign and their

political positionality. I called these sub-levels within the "News" genre-based category, "location" and "solutions."

Location. The activists provide location updates to let other users know where a protest or panel discussion is taking place or to search for each other once there. "@NikitaTMitchell @favianna where you at fam?" Alicia Garza tweeted on April 7, 2016 as she moderated a panel discussion. "@aliciagarza @favianna By the bar, close to the door in a white shirt! Listening to y'all preach," replied Mitchell.[42] Likewise, Brittany Packnett asks West Coast allies when her flight touches down, "what's happening in downtown LA?" People reply with a host of current campaigns and recommendations for places to eat.

Solutions. Once an activist lets the news audience know that he or she has arrived, they usually begin any on-the-scene coverage with a thesis statement of sorts, which describes what the battle of the day will be. Alicia Garza tweeted on July 10, 2016: "CHICAGO JAIL SUPPORT NEEDED AT DIVISION & LARABEE! Badly beaten #AltonSterling #PhilandoCastile demonstrators need your support." A few hours later, she added: "Give & share #BatonRouge bail fund & legal support fund for those arrested last night after #AltonSterling march." The following day, she circulated a pledge to encourage distant witnesses to protest in their own cities. "Yes yes and yes. Solutions over sidelines #TakeThePledge https://t.co/hXov4ubMSs."

Publication. Once activists picked a location and a political position, they began to report news that will travel beyond the enclave. They achieved this through live video

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[42] *See*: https://twitter.com/NikitaTMitchell/status/718276230513106944.

feeds, photo essays, and textual reports. (I did not observe any evidence of audio reports or podcasts that were filed from the field.) Additionally, the activists aggregate tweets of allied protests that coincide with their campaign to engender solidarity amongst the in-group. At this phase of the news making process, the reports leave Twitter's version of the black enclave and enter the counterpublic, which is meant to be accessed by both Black Lives Matter friends and foes, *a posteriori*. This is where the hashtags appear most often in the corpus. This is where the reports begin to venture farther than Twitter's platform. Mobile apps that "sync" published status updates from Twitter have the power to push content to Instagram, Facebook, Periscope, and beyond.

Live coverage. tweets that include live video feeds or photo essays are a common form of reportage on the Movement. As the smartphone affords an immediacy to one's storytelling, many activists leverage it to provide snippets of breaking news or colorful images from the frontlines. Alicia Garza provides a feed of Tamir Rice's mother making a speech in Ohio. She tweeted: "There is a live-stream for Samaria (Tamir's Mom) Rice's keynote for @M4TF & @KentState May 4 @ 12pm (EDT). Tune In." In April 2016, in Chicago, activists from Black Lives Matter's local chapter, BYP100, and Assata's Daughter's chained themselves together on to form a human barricade across Lake Shore Drive, one of the city's main thoroughfares, on NFL Draft Day (Figure 11). Again, Garza provided live coverage alongside an ally from the chapter (@BaburBalos): "@BLMChi @AssataDaughters @BYP_100 shutdown the LakeShore drive https://t.co/ IDR7bmcDtj." The hyperlink referred viewers to a live stream of the campaign, which did not end until the women were arrested late into the night.

Attorney Chris Stewart used his live coverage to counter frame legacy media news angles in a prominent case he supported. He mentioned that when he participated in a rally to protest the police killing of Deaundre Phillips in Atlanta, he noticed that cameras from the local news outlets were trained on the Black Lives Matter activists who turned out to the event. He noticed that few white allies were being interviewed. He took out his smartphone and captured pictures, he said. His tweet read, "This is why I love my city so much, the crowd is so diverse it's unbelievable. Thank you Atlanta… https://t.co/YnBEunNvrk."

Temporal coverage. The activists provided what professional reporters call "enterprise journalism" too. This valuable "Day Two" coverage often provided more context or background than an initial live feed, and unapologetically reframed a legacy media narrative. Brittany Ferrell, for example, tweeted consistently throughout St. Louis's mayoral election to encourage her news audience to vote for Tishaura Jones, an African American woman candidate. "@Tishaura4Mayor says she refuses an endorsement from anyone who stands with rooda. #wokevoterstl #STLMayor2017," Ferrell wrote. (Jeff Rooda was the St. Louis Police Department spokesperson who chastised the NFL's St. Louis Rams for running onto the football field with their hands up, seemingly in solidarity with the "Hands Up, Don't Shoot," false narrative that emerged after Michael Brown's death.) Ferrell tweeted also to oppose Jones's competition: "@LydaKrewson has made it clear that she is on the side of profit OVER ppl. i'm not sorry that i will not be voting… https://t.co/XbQ86L3TVj."[43]

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[43] *See:* https://twitter.com/bdoulaoblongata/status/825842915830272000.

In this manner, Ferrell's timeline sometimes read like a real-time politics "ticker" for the St. Louis elections. She tweeted out information about the mayoral candidates' platforms—especially in terms of their stances on policing. Similarly, Brittany Packnett, a fellow St. Louis native tweeted: "Thank you, @Tishaura4Mayor for calling out coded racist language and the false narratives of our city-and for working to make us better!"

Activists in other instances used their Twitter timelines to produce news stories that commemorated the anniversary of a slain victim of police brutality. "R.I.P. Trayvon Martin who would've been 21 years old if he was alive today. Gone but not forgotten! #BlackLivesMatter," Alicia Garza tweeted. Chris Stewart tweeted similarly: "Happy birthday to Walter Scott. Gone but not forgotten. You woke up the world to injustice and civil rights violations."

Agitation. Hostile engagements on Twitter seem to be par-for-the-course for anti-police brutality activists. Whether it is an individual troll who attacked every post that an activist made, or a broad statement of disdain for the "alt-right" or the Democratic party, these "fighting words" on Twitter bore very little news value. In theory, the imbroglios are avoidable, in part, because Twitter does offer a "block user" feature, which prevents trolls from contacting an activist again. In practice, however, the activists said that their opponents create new phony accounts every day to begin fresh rounds of harassment. Such is the danger of bearing witness on Twitter's public platform. In this limited corpus, the activists battled most commonly with members of the so-called "alt-right" Movement and the Democratic Party.

Anti-alt-right imbroglios. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) describes the Alternative Right (or alt-right) as "a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that 'white identity' is under attack by multicultural forces using 'political correctness' and 'social justice' to undermine white people and 'their' civilization." Characterized by heavy use of social media and online memes, alt-righters eschew 'establishment' conservatism and "embrace white ethnonationalism as a fundamental value."[44] SPLC also acknowledges "Legions of anonymous Twitter users have used the hashtag #AltRight to proliferate their ideas, sometimes successfully pushing them into the political mainstream."

Many of the imbroglios I observed within the corpus appeared to debate alt-right political stances. Alicia Garza engaged in these types of online quarrels most commonly, which may have led her to leave the platform eventually. When Donald Trump took the stage at the Republican National Convention on July 21, 2016, for example, she tweeted: "I don't know what I'm watching right now but I imagine this is the kind of speech Hitler would make #FreedomNow."

A user replied the next day, "You don't know much about Hitler do you? He's not calling for gas chambers for blacks, sweetheart."

Another user defended Garza, tweeting, "neither did Hitler honey. There's a reason concentration camps where [*sic*] kept secret."

Nearly a dozen additional commenters joined the fray at this point, and the conversation devolved into name-calling. Garza offered the penultimate tweet of the

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[44] *See*: https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right.

174

thread: "I'm not your sweetheart. And you might wanna brush up on your history homie. https://t.co/ETw6QbxNfL"[45]

Garza continued to tweet well into the early morning about what a Trump presidency might mean for Black Lives Matter. She said at 3 AM: "To all my folks: LGBT, Muslim, Black, undocumented, crip, Latinx, and more—I love you. Time to ride. Fascism must not win #FreedomNow."[46]

Anti-Dem imbroglios. Many of the activists in the corpus did not support Democratic candidates in local or national elections in 2016. Their timelines were filled with news reports that attempted to illuminate their perception that the Democratic Party has done little to help their communities. Brittany Ferrell railed against the Democratic nominee for St. Louis's mayor in her Twitter timeline. She wrote: "@LydaKrewson will not openly say that she believes STL should be a sanctuary city bc she is afraid of losing federal funds. #wokevoterstl"

Marissa Johnson echoed these sentiments in our interview:

> Democrats are not a solution, you know. The idea was that black folks should all just fall in line behind Dems because Dems are so great and they aren't actually great for us. They don't respond to our needs…and yet Dems still need us to win their primaries. Why are we giving them any power, you know what I mean, over us? They are still going to incarcerate our children at high rates. They're still going to decimate our communities at the same rates. They're still going to steal from us at the same rates. Why are we giving them basically what they need to stay in power?

Imbroglios such as these highlight the rough transition of black witnessing from an enclaved discursive space to a counterpublic. The news stories and opinions from anti-police brutality activists do not flow easily from one sphere to another at times. Leaving

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[45] *See*: https://twitter.com/aliciagarza/status/756319817674530816.

[46] *See*: https://twitter.com/aliciagarza/status/756326636451094529.

that safe space, however, from "preaching to the choir" to facing possible persecution seems to be the very purpose of the reportage: to test and share new ways of thinking about racial relationships in America.

The New Protest #Journalism

This descriptive analysis of the activists' Twitter timelines has been instrumental in helping us answer the remaining research questions:

RQ2:   How do anti-police brutality activists use mobile devices to engage in sustained acts of black witnessing?

RQ3:   How do anti-police brutality activists use Twitter as an *ad-hoc* news outlet to create and circulate protest journalism?

The role of smartphones. I found that smartphones are an invaluable news production tool for the black witnesses who participated in this study. When the activists posted updates about the Movement, it came from an Apple iPhone 83 percent of the time. Devin Allen, who owes his fame to a high-end DSLR camera, instead posts human interest photo essays of black Baltimoreans to Twitter using only an iPhone 7 now, in fact. Some of the witnesses referred to their smartphones explicitly as "weapons." Shellonnee Chinn, the educator from Upstate New York, said that when she faced discrimination at her job, she came to school armed with her cellphone. "They didn't think I was going to have my recorder but it was on me," she recalled in our interview. She added, "Every day from 7:00 in the morning, until I got in the car, I was strapped."

Chinn used the term "strapped" in the same way Hip hop artists use it, to connote a concealed weapon.[47]

The smartphone's size, connectivity, and advanced features offered black witnesses the opportunity to livestream videos of protests that may not appear on nightly news broadcasts. The technology supports the production of photoessays also, which served often as a prelude to more in-depth, serial live tweets of an event. Lastly, the smartphone's interface makes uploading content to Twitter very easy for activists. They even leveraged apps that push content from Twitter to other social networks, and vice versa, to amplify their audiences and their messages.

Twitter as an *ad-hoc* news outlet. The black witnesses I profiled in this study indeed comprise a newsroom that engages in a six-step process to do journalism. At the enclaved level, the witnesses situate their missives *a priori* within the Black Twitter subgroup, so that those in the collective can observe, discuss, and authenticate a potential news peg. Direct mentions and @replies abound during this phase, as the activists talk directly either with each other or with their news audiences. It is in this phase that some witnesses engage in offline conversations also, likely through Twitter's DM function or through text messages on their smartphones.

When the activists felt confident that a story is viable, it moved from Black Twitter's enclave to the broader Twitter counterpublic, and beyond. The activists engaged in production, publication, and agitation until their topic engendered debate in Twitter's discursive spaces, and beyond. Many of the activists, such as Marissa Johnson, had relied

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[47] *See*: http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=strapped.

on Twitter to make content "go viral." Others, like Devin Allen, used it as a place to post photoessays that humanize black people and cities that have suffered extreme pain. In either case the African Americans who continue to bear witness to the Black Lives Matter Movement—even when no particular hashtag is "trending,"—indeed form a Greek chorus of sorts, reminding elected officials and, sometimes, legacy media that the whole world is watching.

The concept of black witnessing. In Ch. 1, I called for an intersectional definition of media witnessing. I defined my concept of "black witnessing," which argued that: (1) it assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; (2) it co-opts racialized online spaces, such as Black Twitter, to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and (3) it relies on interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency to engage diverse audiences (Richardson, 2016).

To the first point, I did find that the activists I profiled did not report news under any pretense of objectivity. Their reports were juxtaposed often alongside serialized "call-to-action" tweets that encourage audiences to telephone an elected official, participate in a rally, or visit an organizational meeting. The news content, for this reason, was unapologetically subjective and often defiant. It was unafraid to challenge legacy reports or statistics that were false or contributory to hegemonic narratives of blackness. As all of these activists admitted receiving death threats, they were ever-aware that they may not be able to stop the powers-that-be from surveilling them. They were emboldened, still, at

the prospect of looking *back*. Samuel Sinyangwe, the data scientist, said his reportage "runs circles around the experts," which he said is, "pretty cool."

To the second point, while Black Twitter is an *ad-hoc* newsroom for the Movement, I did find evidence that it may be stratified along class lines. Many of the participants in this study shared the same educational markers of success, in terms of attaining advanced degrees from prominent universities. This may be a function of the snowball participation recruitment process, in that the activists recommended those with whom they shared the closest ties in real life. It bears further study, however, to make sure that research about Black Twitter or black social movements that take place through Twitter are not skewed to focus mainly on the elite users who have the leisure time to access the platform around-the-clock.

Lastly, it was interesting to discover that Twitter could support an enclaved black public sphere, even though it is a public communication platform. Twitter's timelines are noisy, so it is very easy to miss the flow of side conversations that occur between two activists. Any conversations that I highlighted in this chapter came as the result of drilling down into individual tweets to find a thread of dialogue. A casual Twitter user may not have the time to mine through threads this way, so black witnesses could work as privately as the platform's interface allows, until they are ready to enter the counterpublic with hashtags, live videos and poignant images. These early findings suggest an intersectional approach to media witnessing is warranted, for with this case study, we may have only just begun to detect movement behind the veil.

Chapter 6—Conclusion

"I made the decision to love myself so radically that I am

worth more than whatever I could lose."

—Brittany Packnett[48]

"Please don't shoot her," I whispered. Someone had emailed me a clip of Bree Newsome's now-iconic climb to the top of the South Carolina State building to snatch down the Confederate flag on June 27, 2015. Like everyone else, I watched the African American woman raise the traditional symbol of white nationalism and say, "You come against me with hatred and oppression and violence. I come against you in the name of God. This flag comes down today!" (Goodman, 2015). I realized I was holding my breath. I thought the police would kill her. Newsome made it down the pole safely, though, and into the waiting handcuffs of area authorities, while reciting Psalm 27. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" she said breathlessly as she was taken into police custody. Newsome's choice of Scripture punctuated a painful realization: just ten days before her civil disobedience, Dylann Roof, a white man, had gone into Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, participated in an hour of Bible Study, and killed nine black people. Various legacy media outlets reported that he wanted to start a "race war." With the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States in late 2016, many of the activists who were interviewed in this corpus said that they believe those days are upon us.

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[48] *See*: https://twitter.com/CitizenUniv/status/845790199208525825.

The "alt-right" Movement, which was formerly marginalized as the Tea Party during the Obama years, has rebranded itself through an artful use of identity politics, social media, and right-leaning news outlets, such as *FOX News* and *Breitbart News Network*. As the Southern Poverty Law Center notes: "Trump is a hero to the alt-right…. [He] regularly rails against 'political correctness,' Muslims, immigrants, Mexicans, Chinese and others. They have also worked hard to affix the alt right brand to Trump through the use of hashtags and memes."

In terms of Black Lives Matter, Trump branded himself as the "law and order" candidate who would resurrect unconstitutional policing practices, such as "stop-and-frisk," if elected, he said in the first televised Presidential debate (Dwyer, 2016). In that broadcast, Trump claimed:

> We have a situation where we have our inner cities, African-Americans, Hispanics, are living in hell, because it's so dangerous. You walk down the street, you get shot. In Chicago, they've had thousands of shootings, thousands, since January 1st. Thousands of shootings. And I say, where is this? Is this a war-torn country? What are we doing? And we have to stop the violence, we have to bring back law and order, in a place like Chicago, where thousands of people have been killed (Nussbaum, 2016).

Since Trump's inauguration, he has threatened to "send in the Feds" to Chicago to address the "carnage," according to the *Washington Post* (Wagner & Berman, 2017). For these reasons, activists within the corpus are concerned about the political shift America is experiencing after Obama. As Samuel Sinyangwe mentioned in the interviews, he fears the Trump administration will label him a terrorist and put him on a "no-fly" list. Sinyangwe is concerned equally with the misinformation that Trump's top officials disseminate as "alternative facts." (Kellyanne Conway, the U.S. Counselor to the President, coined the term in a Jan. 22, 2017 *Meet the Press* interview, where she

181

challenged legacy media reports of the inauguration's small attendance in relation to Obama's historic numbers.)

This emergent political leadership, which is powered by extreme xenophobia, racism, religious intolerance, and gender discrimination, already has proven to be difficult to cover—even for professional journalists. At one of the White House's first press conferences, a CNN correspondent who asked a question that U.S. Press Secretary Sean Spicer did not like was threatened with expulsion from the Press Corps. The exchange became fodder for late-night comedy shows, but it sent a real chill through some of the activists in this study, which saw it as a signal that their First Amendment rights might be trampled under this Administration. If a professional journalist could not bear witness in his privileged capacity as the Fourth Estate, how would they, as independent black witnesses, be able to continue their work? In this dissertation, I have aimed to illustrate these tensions. After all, bearing witness while black always has been more than the act of an African-American person picking up a cellphone to record a human rights violation. It has been an act of protest too, since the black gaze has been outlawed historically. In this manner, black witnessing indeed: (1) assumes an investigative or sousveillant editorial stance to advocate for African American civil rights; (2) co-opts racialized online spaces, such as Black Twitter, to serve as its *ad-hoc* news wire; and (3) relies on interlocking black public spheres, which are endowed with varying levels of political agency to engage diverse audiences. Here I will recapitulate the main theories and findings from each chapter, to situate these conclusions in the current canon of journalism studies, and make suggestions for future areas of inquiry.

New Voices, Old Hegemonies

In the 1990s, theories of media witnessing involved either a tripartite bundle of accounts by, of and through the media, or a quadripartite matrix that was divided along planes of space and time, where "being there" mattered more than viewing a reproduced copy of the event. In the 2000s, as the proliferation of cameraphones rose, media scholars focus instead on what necessitated impromptu acts of journalism. In our current paradigm, dead and martyred black men occupy a heartfelt space in the African American political imaginary, as their deaths have left room for the living to make new demands of its government. Does black witnessing successfully challenge old hegemonies, however? Or are the news myths of black criminality too engrained into the American consciousness to evoke sympathy for slain victims of police brutality? More "strong effects" studies that evaluate how news audiences' exposure to black witnessing impacts their political leanings (and support for Black Lives Matter) are necessary.

Additionally, the canon needs more analyses of news reports that cover Black Lives Matter and its broader Movement of like-minded allies. Aside from Teun A. van Dijk's extensive volumes on the ways news media communicate racism, there is a relatively small pool of discourse analyses that show, empirically, that legacy media indeed select words that trigger and reinforce stereotypes of ethnic minorities. Lastly, the myth of marginality eschews human interest stories of black people, highlighting them instead in news broadcasts only when there is a problem. Do reports from black witnesses such as Devin Allen challenge this myth successfully? Do his everyday images of black Baltimoreans humanize the troubled city or exoticize it?

As a final point on hegemony, I spoke of power relationships in Ch. 2 to emphasize the tensions between race, news myths and narrative control. The literature review offered an overview of theories of power, ranging from Karl Marx to Michel Foucault, to explain how the concept of *sous*veillance originated. The act of glaring back at authorities from below indeed was a theme I found in the semistructured interviews. The activists were aware that they were up against media hegemonies that are as old as the journal entries that British colonizers made when they encountered Africans for the first time in the 18th century. Still, the activists persist. They believe that their journalism will revise racist narratives and redress police brutality for a people that they love very much. "Blackness is often times very, very misunderstood," Brittany Ferrell shook her head as her interview drew to a close. She added, "When you're black and you're angry or you're black and you're fighting for something, people don't really receive that very well…People don't believe that we're worth what we're fighting for." Brittany Packnett challenges this line of thinking. She told an audience at Citizen University's annual conference in March 2017, "I made the decision to love myself so radically that I am worth more than whatever I could lose."[49] Both Ferrell and Packnett are writing books about their journeys to bear witness during Ferguson. It will be interesting to follow the professional trajectories of black witnesses as media makers, to observe whether they join the mainstream to work alongside professional journalists or remain independent storytellers that work outside of traditional newsrooms.

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[49] *See*: https://twitter.com/CitizenUniv/status/845790199208525825.

New Agenda-Setters, Old Objectivity Norms

In the early part of this millennium, as academics argued about whether we should define the amateur news producer as a citizen journalist, a networked journalist, or a produser, we missed, perhaps, an investigation into why subaltern groups resort to this form of advocacy-style reportage in the first place, using informal, *ad-hoc* news networks, such as Twitter, to achieve its ends. With the exception of the recent study titled "New Opportunities For Diversity: Twitter, Journalists, and Traditionally Underserved Communities" (Brown, Hendrickson & Littau, 2014), few studies consider the impact of black witnesses (and witnesses from other marginalized groups, for that matter) on the professional newsroom. Are these counterpublics actively setting the agenda for legacy media, or are professional journalists just getting better at listening to the ambient conversation on the world's social networking services? Marissa Johnson believes it is the former. She said her experience showed her how much power she has to drive a news story. She said that she believes this is why protestors must continue to produce original news—especially in this new political climate. She explained:

> High schoolers across the country have been hella more woke than all of us—than even the adults—especially here in Seattle. The adults have tried everything to keep them from marching and organizing and they still do. Their political analysis is hella on point—so way further along than where I would be at that age—and I think it's really because they're growing up. They're super connected via social media. They see exactly what's happening.

Recent studies may refute Johnson's claims, however, stating that Millennials are having a very difficult time discerning real news from fake news. Some 82 percent of middle-schoolers could not distinguish between sponsored content and a real news story on a website, a Stanford University study of 7,804 students found (Shellenbarger, 2016).

185

If youth media literacy falters, how will black witnessing thrive should the "alt-right" fabricate false narratives? And what does all of this mean for civic engagement? After all, black witnesses never pretended to be objective, they said in Ch. 4. Their journalism has advocated for collective action, just as ethnic publications did in the 19th and 20th centuries. We need more studies, therefore, that probe the possibilities for journalism education reform. Just as Clark (2013) called on media professors to fuse "critical media literacy and critical service learning" to cultivate the new-school, "media activist," it may be time to reevaluate why we are not teaching Millennial journalism students when subjectivity *is* appropriate or necessary. By proposing new pedagogical ways forward, we can begin to have better dialogues about when and where marginalized witnesses should enter journalism's hallowed discursive spaces, to paraphrase Anna Julia Cooper.

New Gatekeepers, Old Power Structures

As Devin Allen wrapped his interview, he waxed lyrical about notions of power. He said that he is aware that professional journalists feel he "jumped the line" to land the cover of a major magazine, but he is not sorry, he said. He explained that his work has empowered him to see black people in Baltimore—and marginalized people struggling elsewhere—with a humanity that he never found when watching the news. "I used to be so hard and cold, but through my photography and the way I see the world now, I'm a crybaby," he said with a smile. Allen said by photographing everyday black life in Baltimore, he finds a capacity to gatekeep that which is newsworthy, and worth fighting for, in his community. He has a new book of photography and essays that will be published in June 2017. "That's the thing with this new Movement in our generation. You

can't smother us, because if we take one leader, another one is going to just jump right back up," he explained. "That's the thing. Even with the uprising, everybody was a leader at one point in time. Sometimes I lead. If I'm doing a panel discussion or have a hot show, I'm taking the lead. I'm controlling the narrative for this day. Another day it might be another activist that stands up, and it's his or her time to lead."

   While old power structures of the media newsroom still dominate much of what we see on television, read in magazines, newspapers and websites, and hear on the radio, the fact remains that stories that have some form of visual component nowadays make it to the "top of the fold," in newsroom parlance—even if it did come from an amateur. Can savvy black witnesses, like Allen, use their media to enter a counterpublic that challenges legacy media's portrayals of blackness? In Ch. 5, I outlined the activists' six-step, mobile-mediated process that attempts to do so. In the enclaved phase, the "in-group" uses Twitter to observe news pegs, discuss a story's merits and authenticate its veracity. Next, in the counterpublic phase, the activists produce the story, publish it to their timelines and agitate a discussion with a broader audience. My corpus was small—only 34,309 tweets total. Still, I would like to see if this six-step process holds true at a larger scale. The field of journalism studies would benefit from studies on how the mobile journalism workflow affects gatekeeping practices in both traditional and ad-hoc newsrooms. "The integration of a mobile acquisition and editorial management platform and the implementation of a mobile workflow within professional journalism practice are still relatively undocumented," Mills, Egglestone, Rashid, and Väätäjä (2012) wrote, accordingly.

Conclusion

The legendary playwright, Lorraine Hansberry, wrote in her autobiography that the ability to survive and thrive while black in America was an act of rebellion itself. "My people are poor. And they are tired. And they are determined to live. Our [Chicago] Southside is a place apart: each piece of our living is a protest," she wrote (1970, p. 45). The activists who participated in this study embodied this spirit of dogged determination. With their smartphones in hand, they were armed with a new kind of weapon. It may not be the Winchester rifle that Ida B. Wells (1892) urged blacks to carry for self-defense in the early 20th century, but to some people, like Diamond Reynolds, it offered protection during crisis. Whether the growing video evidence of police brutality against black people will amount to increased police prosecutions or widespread policing reforms remains to be seen. The one thing that seems certain, however, is that African American activists will continue to leverage the technologies of their day to report news of human rights injustices that are leveled against its marginalized communities—just as they have always. The *Washington Post*'s Soraya Nadia McDonald (2014) wrote: "Perhaps the most significant contribution of Black Twitter is that it increases visibility of black people online, and in doing so, dismantles the idea that white is standard and everything else is 'Other.' It's a radical demand for acceptance by simply existing—or sometimes dominating—in a space and being yourself, without apology or explanation."

Appendix A—Interview Map

Motivations

1. Tell me about the moment you decided to commit to the Black Lives Matter Movement.
2. What do you want people to know about the Black Lives Matter Movement?
3. When you Tweet Black Lives Matter updates, who do you imagine is your core audience?

Surveillance

1. Recent reports that the NSA surveil Black Lives Matter activists through their Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts has made international headlines. Has this news changed the way that you use social media? If so, then how?
2. Ramsay Orta, who filmed the last minutes of Eric Garner's death in NYC, reported that witnessing caused NYPD to harass and stalk him. In light of this, do you think people of color should continue to record evidence of police brutality in their communities? Why or why not?
3. When you provide regular updates of Black Lives Matter news, you go on record as one of the leaders of the Movement. Can you talk about some of the vulnerabilities that come along with having this type of digital omnipresence?

Counter-narrative*

1. How do you think mainstream news media outlets portray the Black Lives Matter Movement?
2. Is your goal to work with existing news media outlets to highlight BLM news, or to circumvent these outlets completely?
3. I used data gleaned from the subject's Twitter timeline to ask one or two more questions about their intent for framing a news item a certain way, or why they chose to use a certain hashtag, historical reference, etc. (As each Twitter timeline differs, this section was not the same, from participant-to-participant.)

Post-racialism

1. Throughout history, people such as Ida B. Wells have used journalism to bear witness to human rights violations against blacks. Do you see yourself as part of this legacy? If so, then how?
2. Do you think the black press is doing a good job of covering the Movement? Why or why not?
3. How do you think that mainstream news outlets portray black victims of police brutality?

Community

1. What kinds of updates do you think your Twitter followers rely on you to give?
2. Tell me about how your use of Twitter helps you organize people in real life.
3. What are some of the downsides to using Twitter to create and share Movement news?

Appendix B—Twitter Collection Tools

Twitter Archiver Source Code

```javascript
function downloadTweets(searchTerm) {

    var twitterService = getTwitterService_();

    var props = PropertiesService.getUserProperties();
    var sinceID = props.getProperty("SINCEID") || "";

    var api = "https://api.twitter.com/1.1/search/tweets.json?
count=100&include_entities=false";
    api += "&result_type=recent&q=" + encodeString_(searchTerm) +
"&since_id=" + sinceID;

    var result = twitterService.fetch(api);

    if (result.getResponseCode() == 200) {

        var json = JSON.parse(result.getContentText());

        var tweets = json.statuses;

        // SINCEID will store the ID of the last processed tweet

        for (var i = tweets.length - 1; i >= 0; i--) {
            logTweet_(tweets[i]);
            if (i == 0) {
                props.setProperty("SINCEID", tweets[0].id_str);
            }
        }
    }
}

/* Add the tweet details into the sheet */
function logTweet_(tweet) {

    var log = [];

    log.push(new Date(tweet.created_at));
    log.push('=HYPERLINK("https://twitter.com/' +
tweet.user.screen_name + '/status/' + tweet.id_str + '","' +
tweet.user.name + '")');
    log.push(tweet.user.followers_count);
```

```javascript
    log.push(tweet.user.friends_count);
    log.push(tweet.retweet_count);
    log.push(tweet.favorite_count);
    log.push(tweet.text.replace(/\n|\r/g, " "));

    SpreadsheetApp.getActiveSheet().appendRow(log)
}

function getTwitterService_() {

    var props = PropertiesService.getUserProperties();

    return OAuth1.createService('twitter')
        .setAccessTokenUrl('https://api.twitter.com/oauth/
access_token')
        .setRequestTokenUrl('https://api.twitter.com/oauth/
request_token')
        .setAuthorizationUrl('https://api.twitter.com/oauth/authorize')
        .setConsumerKey(props.getProperty("consumer_key"))
        .setConsumerSecret(props.getProperty("consumer_secret"))
        .setProjectKey(ScriptApp.getProjectKey())
        .setCallbackFunction('twitter')
        .setPropertyStore(props);

}

/* Properly encode the Twitter search query */
function encodeString_(q) {
    var str = encodeURIComponent(q);

    str = str.replace(/!/g, '%21');
    str = str.replace(/\*/g, '%2A');
    str = str.replace(/\(/g, '%28');
    str = str.replace(/\)/g, '%29');
    str = str.replace(/'/g, '%27');
    return str;
}
```

Twecoll Commands

```
$ twecoll -h
usage: twecoll [-h] [-v] [-s]
       {resolve,init,fetch,tweets,likes,edgelist}

Twitter Collection Tool

optional arguments:

-h, --help             show this help message and exit
-v, --version          show program's version number and exit
-s, --stats            show Twitter throttling stats and exit

sub-commands:
       {resolve,init,fetch,tweets,likes,edgelist}

resolve                retrieve user_id for screen_name or vice versa
init                   retrieve friends data for screen_name
fetch                  retrieve friends of handles in .dat file
tweets                 retrieve tweets
likes                  retrieve likes
edgelist               generate graph in GML format
```

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