SPRING INTO ACTION FOR BLACK WOMEN:

EXAMINING THE BLACK LIVES MATTER ORGANIZATION’S TWITTER COVERAGE OF STATE-SANCTIONED VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK WOMEN

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the black women and girls who have inspired, shaped, and affirmed my excellence and existence. I am forever grateful for your support and hope to continue my advocacy for you. I am because you are.
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ABSTRACT

The thesis charts and contextualizes the Twitter rhetoric produced by the Black Lives Matter organization to understand how they discuss and engage state-sanctioned violence against cisgender and transgender black women. Relying upon intersectional theory and virtual public sphere theory for theoretical framing, a textual analysis of 825 tweets from @BlkLivesMatter, the organization’s official Twitter account was conducted during May 1st – August 31st, 2015. This period is referred to by movement leaders as the “Black Spring.” The results suggest that Black Lives Matter is balanced in their coverage of state-sanctioned violence against black women and men during this period. Further, the organization embraces people from across the sexual and gender identity spectrum as demonstrated in their online advocacy and offline social action. Considering these findings, a broadened understanding of how black women and girls and other identities are included in the narrative of state-sanctioned violence enhances our knowledge of the systemic realities and hardships impacting the black community.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, Twitter, Black Spring, Transgender, Cisgender, Black Women, Virtual Public Sphere, Intersectionality, State-Sanctioned Violence, Police Brutality, Institutional Discrimination
CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The first chapter of the thesis is divided into four main sections. The first section introduces my thesis topic and presents my thesis statement. The second reviews the disciplinary literature which is relevant to my examination, including research on Black Lives Matter, social movements, social network services, Twitter, and Black Twitter. The third section outlines my critical approach and methodology. My fourth section describes the contributions this thesis makes to the communication discipline and I conclude with a chapter outline.

Introduction

Black Lives Matter is an organization leading a social justice movement to eradicate state-sanctioned violence against black people. The messages and imagery currently pervading mainstream media around the movement focus on unarmed black men who have been murdered by police and the subsequent outrage by citizens in communities where these acts of violence have occurred. Unrest in America and internationally is growing in the form of protests and rebellions as reports of the incidents increase and police precincts are scrutinized by the public and government officials. The activities are uncomfortable and polarizing, particularly as histories of systemic racism in communities across the country are unraveling.

In March 2015, I met Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, co-founders of Black Lives Matter. The conversation was a liberating moment as I – a queer, black man from a working class family – listened to the organization leaders share the inclusive nature of their efforts. They pronounced that state-sanctioned violence impacts black women, black immigrants, black queer and trans people, black people in poverty, black people
disenfranchised through mass-incarceration, black youth, and black disabled persons. Their words were poignant and saddening as they provided a palpable reminder of the systemic racial injustices that are deeply embedded in the fabric of the United States of America. The careful articulation and clarity of the movement expanded my limited understanding and helped me realize the Black Lives Matter agenda goes beyond the mainstream media’s depictions of the effort as just resisting police brutality against unarmed black men.

Garza created #BlackLivesMatter, a hashtag or tool of Web 2.0 for categorizing user-generated content online and on social media networks, with Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullors in 2013. According to Garza the hashtag was “a call to action for Black people after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed” (Garza, 2014). Garza said the tag “was a response to the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and also, unfortunately, our movements” (Garza, 2014). In August 2014, following the death of Michael Brown, an unarmed, 18-year-old, Black man who was fatally shot by White Ferguson, Missouri officer, Darren Wilson; the hashtag resurfaced online as the content and images helped facilitate offline demonstrations and protests to the violence against Brown. As the hashtag gained visibility, the women developed the infrastructure for the movement and organization. Black Lives Matter currently has 26 chapters across the United States and two international chapters – one in Ghana, one in Toronto (Guynn, 2015).

When asked about the leadership structure of Black Lives Matter, the three co-founders consider it to be a “leaderfull” movement. This model does not rely on a
singular leader to articulate its aims in part because of the intense vulnerability and violence often inflicted on these individuals. This is no more evident than in the treatment of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s – the most notable and modeled black liberation movement in American history. The “leaderfull” model enables a more egalitarian leadership where the old is not favored over the young; women are not relegated to auxiliary roles; queer, gay, and lesbian leadership is welcomed and transgender people as leaders is embraced (Cooper, 2015).

The visibility of the Black Lives Matter organization increased significantly in 2015. The hashtag was named the American Dialect Society's word of the year for 2014 in January 2015. Additionally, 2015 included more brutal deaths: Walter Scott, a 50-year-old black man, who was shot and killed as he was apparently fleeing white North Charleston officer, Michael Slager, 33; Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old, black man killed as he was detained by police in Baltimore, Maryland; and Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old, black woman who died in police custody in a Texas County Jail. Their murders triggered a multitude of online and offline social actions (Drehle, 2015). Most importantly, twenty-five unsolved deaths of black transgender women grew across the country and while those stories did not make national headlines, the deaths were discussed and social action was taken by Black Lives Matter.

This period of deliberate social action following the deaths of so many individuals has been referred to as the “Black Spring” by the Black Lives Matter co-founders. In May 2015 amid the social actions in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray, Garza stated in a piece by NewsOne:
“What we know is that there is a Black Spring that is emerging where communities that have been under the boot of police terrorism, communities that have been attacked by poverty and unemployment are rising up, coming together and advancing new solutions and new visions and new demands to create a new world where Black peoples’ lives matter…” (Coleman, 2015).

Opal Tometi echoed Garza as she noted in an interview with Essence Magazine in July 2015, “Well, it’s safe to say that this is the Black Spring! We are seeing a vibrant Black human rights movement sweep the nation and the globe” (Maxwell 2015). The term “Black Spring” was inspired by the social action that happened in the Arab World in the spring of 2010. The people of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and several other nations in the region mobilized to oppose historical political and economic marginalization by autocratic government systems (Beydoun, 2015). Poverty and stigmatized religion intersected with tribal lines characterized the persecution in the Arab World as their dictatorships sought to denigrate marginalized communities to maintain their socio-political power (Beydoun, 2015). Similarly, in the United States, White supremacy as a means to sustain racialized wealth through the persistent political and economic disenfranchisement of Blacks ignited opposition to the U.S. government by Black people and their allies (Beydoun, 2015).

**Thesis Statement**

My new knowledge of Black Lives Matter triggered several questions: how could the media miss the inclusion of violence beyond Black men represented in the movement’s mission? Have the co-founders – three women, two queer, and one a child of Black immigrants – consistently voiced this extensive agenda? What rhetorical methods are
deployed for everyone to act in honor of Blacks lives? Are the media channels controlled by the organization disseminating a consistent message? I consider this thesis an opportunity to examine how the online rhetoric produced by the Black Lives Matter organization discusses and engages state-sanctioned violence in the Black community beyond police violence against Black men. Specifically, the thesis will examine how the organization discusses state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender and transgender women on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account during the Black Spring, a period I have identified as May 1 to August 31, 2015. For the purposes of the study, cisgender is defined as a person whose gender identity is aligned with their physical sex or anatomy at birth, while transgender is a term that describes a diverse community of people whose gender identities differ from that which they were assigned at birth (Johnson, 2013).
Literature Review

In the field of communication, literature surrounding the topic of my study can be divided into the following categories: Black Lives Matter, social movement theory, studies about social media and social movements, and studies about Twitter and in particular, Black Twitter. In this section, I will review the relevant literature as it fits into these four categories.

Black Lives Matter

Rhetorical scholars Langford and Speight suggest Black Lives Matter rescripts the Black body within the white consciousness, creating a new epistemology for understanding Black people. One way this occurs is by denying negative portrayals of Black people with the affirmation of material existence and significance. Black Lives Matter acknowledges Black humanity, emotions, hopes, families, dreams, spirituality, and other facets of identity. (Langford and Speight, 2016). In addition to the positive presence, they go on to assert that Black Lives Matter makes violence against the Black body a newsworthy event, declaring a refusal to be ignored in the public consciousness and fueling needed conversations about race. Further, Black Lives Matter unmasks white privilege by calling attention to the inequities that exist within our justice system and various parts of society. Whiteness is no longer an invisible racial identity but the disparate violence illuminated by Black Lives Matters calls everyday aggressions into question. As a result, colorblind rhetoric that pronounces the existence of a post racial society is undone because Black Lives Matter advances a color consciousness to advocate for the civil rights and civil liberties of Black people (Langford & Speight, 2016).
Langford and Speights’ scholarship on Black Lives Matter also provides an understanding of counter movements such as All Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, and White Lives Matter that seek to shift the focus away from the pronunciations of institutional discrimination and violence made under the banner of Black Lives Matter. All Lives Matter nullifies and rejects systemic inequality and violence based on racial identity as an important feature for consideration. Blue Lives Matter suggests the Black Lives Matter movement to protect the civil liberties and rights of Black people threatens institutional structures and endangers law enforcement. Blue Lives Matter also maintains that in order for Black lives to matter then Blue Lives cannot, creating a mutual exclusion that doesn’t permit both to coexist. White Lives Matter explicitly extolls the White race and denigrates the Black race with the use of stereotypes. The statement also seeks to invalidate Black Lives Matter with claims that the movement engages the same discriminatory behavior it is in protest against. (Langford & Speight, 2016). Together these statements attempt to maintain white supremacy because Black Lives Matter nor any other critique can be sustained long enough to challenge it (Langford & Speight, 2016).

The rhetorical interpretation of Black Lives Matter is further explicated in the work of Julius Bailey and David Leonard. The scholars assert that Black Lives Matter demands an alternative to the present racial configuration in the United States on several grounds. Morally, the movement indicates abuse under the law, bringing together discussions of capitalist exploitation, law enforcement violence, and structural poverty. These appeals connect the conditions of Black people to those in various parts of the world, emphasizing international injustice caused by American imperialism (Bailey &
Leonard, 2016). Black Lives Matter also deconstructs notions of Black death, hopelessness, and nihilism promoted by perpetual state violence by affirming Black love as a necessary political intervention. When state violence seeks to defile the way in which Blacks and non-Blacks understand what it means to be Black in America, Black Lives Matter challenges the stereotypes and labels that govern how Black people are treated and represented (Bailey & Leonard, 2016).

The scholarship in the communication discipline on the ways in which Black Lives Matter discusses other forms of violence against black people beyond cisgender Black men is so preliminary that it is limited to unpublished presentations. A panel at the National Communication Association explained the role of Black women in historical and current human rights movements, including Black Lives Matter, as well examined the historical marginalization Black women face (Little, Cooper, & Warren, 2015). At the same conference, Ward examined how photographs of children-in-protest during Black Lives Matter demonstrations offer a visual space to continually deny of childhood for Black kids (Ward, 2015). These piece reflect the limited examination in the discipline that speaks to other Black identities.

**Studies about Reformist and Revolutionary Social Movements**

Black Lives Matter is best characterized as a reformist and revolutionary social movement given the aims to change state action. Herbert W. Simon provides a foundational understanding of social movements in his article, “Requirements, Problems and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements,” where he identifies the rhetorical dilemmas faced by reformist and revolutionary movements and the strategies needed to remedy them. He suggests that great movements are informal structures
charged to perform much like private corporations and governments and are capable of combining “antithetical strategies” without inconsistency by using appeals to “higher principles.” These appeals are defined as those divine morals and values that may be understood as right and wrong (Simon, 1970). In the case of Black Lives Matter, abuse under the law and the unfulfilled promise of the American democracy, including the values that all are created equal and entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, serve as key appeals for the movement’s existence (Bailey & Leonard, 2016).

Black Lives Matter’s model of organization also help define the organization as a social movement. Social movements, according to Simon, confront challenges related to external pressures and internal operations as they must “attract, maintain, and mold” followers into an organized unit. The dilemma, however, lies in the fact that the “needs of individual members or masses may be incompatible with organizational imperatives.” This requires movement leaders to act as intermediates. They must employ peaceful persuasion that uses the language and respectability of the social order to enter decision centers, while also deploying militant confrontations that energize followers and gain visibility to provoke the larger structures they seek to change (Simon, 1970). The challenge with Simon’s theory in context of the Black Lives Matter movements is its emphasis on a leader-centered model of social movement. As mentioned earlier, Black Lives Matter embraces a “leaderfull” model of organizing; leveraging the collective strength of local organizers across the world to advocate and speak on behalf of the movement (Cooper, 2015).

Karyln Kohrs Campbell advances this notion of a democratic social movement as she examines the rhetoric of women’s liberation. Campbell constitutes the movement for
women’s liberation as dialectic between discourses that deal with the public, structural problems, and the significance of personal exigencies (Campbell, 1973). “Consciousness raising” is a key focus in this tension as Campbell suggests that all [women] participate and lead; all are considered experts. The goal is to make the personal political: to build awareness and transcend alienation to create sisterhood, a sense that perceived personal deficiencies and problems are shared as a result of a common position based in identity (Campbell, 1973). In accordance with this notion, the populist nature of Black Lives Matter dismantles notions of respectability founded on education, income or middle class status, gender and sexuality as protection against state-sanctioned violence to allow all Black voices and experiences to be heard and understood. (Garza, 2014)

**Twitter and Social Movements**

A careful examination of social movements in context of social network services is needed to best understand the context surrounding the analysis of tweets from the @BlkLivesMatter Twitter account. There is a plethora of research on social network services, particularly as these online communities evolve with innovation in the Internet and mobile technology. Social networking services offer novel communication forms and tools that enable online social networking, including satisfying social needs, providing supportive relationships with family and friends, and facilitating information sharing and acquisition (Chang, Choi, Bazarova, & Lockenhoff, 2015). Their social functions and effects vary depending on users’ individual characteristics, such as race, age, sexual orientation, gender, ability as well as personality factors and network characteristics, such as network size, density, and composition (Chang et. al, 2015).
Paul Gerbaudo in his book *Tweets and the Streets* indicates that within popular movements activists are using internet-based applications such as Twitter for representation and public attention, as a tool of citizen journalism, and to choreograph social action (Gerbaudo, 2012). He describes the choreography of social action as “a process of symbolic construction of public space which facilitates and guides the physical assembling of a highly dispersed and individualized constituency” (Gerbaudo, 2012). Activists become choreographers “setting the scene for the movements’ gathering in public space, construction of common identifications and accumulating or triggering an emotional impulse towards public assembly” (Gerbaudo, 2012). Black Lives Matter functions much like Gerbaudo describes and it is through their online efforts that their offline activity is coordinated and sustained.

Since launching in 2006, Twitter has become one of the most essential services for social movement organizing in the 21st century. Two notable and studied intersections of organizing social movements online and through social networking sites such as Twitter include the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street movements of the early 2010s. The Arab Spring demonstrated social media as a powerful tool for empowering “leaderless networks,” mobilizing the public, enabling citizen journalists, and connecting activists at regional and global levels (Frangonikolopoulos & Chapsos, 2012; Davison, 2015). Similarly, the Occupy Wall Street Movement is best characterized by the use of social media, particularly Twitter, for political discussion and to communicate protest information (Theocharis et al. 2015).

As of September 2016, Twitter has more than 313 million monthly active users with 82% of them accessing the site from mobile devices and 79% of accounts situated
outside the United States (Twitter, 2016). Twitter is inspired by the act of blogging, a process of posting and editing content on the World Wide Web. The 140 character limit for sending messages (tweets) allows users to post from their mobile devices as well as the Twitter web interface. On Twitter, users create a profile that displays their list of followers and accounts they follow. Search functions allow users and visitors to view content posted by another account unless the account is locked or private (Clark, 2014).

Twitter’s communication conventions enable its use as a tool for social action. For instance, the @user-name convention allows users to direct a message, reply to a user, or simply reference another user (e.g. @BlkLivesMatter, @AliciaGarza). Re-tweets are copies and amended content from other user-generated messages on twitter and is indicated through the abbreviation “RT.” Comments allow for users to quote user-generated messages with the addition of their own messages. Photos, videos, hyperlinked articles, and memes or content that is characterized by its viral circulation online in various media expressions, are also important features circulated through Twitter (Sharma, 2013).

The hashtag is another convention on Twitter and plays an important role in Twitter conversation and activism. The hashtag is a user-generated meta-discourse convention (# + keyword) to coordinate Twitter conversations (Clark, 2014). Hashtags range from “playful or expressive” applications to the coordination of emergency relief. The hashtag also functions in the formation of community, advocacy for issues, and identity affirmation. (Bruns & Jean, 2011). Hashtags are integral to the study of Black Lives Matter because of the movement’s genesis and organization around the hashtag
BlackLivesMatter. Black feminists also use hashtags to gain attention for a group that is often overlooked – black women. (Williams, 2015).

**Black Twitter**

The mediation of cultural identity on Twitter is best described through Black Twitter. The substantial contingency of Black Twitter users referred to by many as “Black Twitter” is an important factor in the international visibility and dissemination of Black concerns and political action like those from @BlkLivesMatter and the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. According to a 2013 article in *USA Today*, research conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project reveals that “among black Internet users, 26% use Twitter, far outpacing whites (14%) and Hispanics (19%).” Blacks and Hispanics are also the leading purchasers of smartphones and tablets, tools most often used to access Twitter (Yu, 2015). A 2012 Nielsen Study reports that 54.4% of black phone owners and 57.3% of Hispanic phone owners own smartphones vs. 44.7% for whites (Yu, 2015).

The conception of Black Twitter is commonly attributed to Choire Sicha’s 2009 article, “What Were Black People Talking About on Twitter Last Night.” Anil Dash in 2008 on the blog also predicted discussions of Twitter’s promotion of Black discourse in his piece “Yo Mama’s So Fat.” Subsequent news stories followed about the overrepresentation of Black people on Twitter, and thus “Black Twitter” was born (Brock, 2012).

Black Twitter use is most recognized in the trending topics of the platform. These topics are the most the tweeted-about subjects and frequently include topics that have a direct connection to Black American cultures or have a high representation of Black
Twitter users (Florini, 2014). However, it is important to acknowledge that while Black users are networked and connecting through Twitter by engaging similar tastes, concerns, and cultural practices, just like there is no single Black culture in America, it is difficult to make a claims for a single Black Twitter (Florini, 2014). However, Black Lives Matter and its focus on Black issues helps prompt the Black social media community and organizations to recognize issues and respond to them (Williams, 2015).

After careful review of the literature, I conclude that as a relatively new social justice movement there is limited research on Black Lives Matter and particularly the ways it discusses and engages state-sanctioned violence beyond police brutality against Black cisgender and transgender women on Twitter.

**Methodology and Critical Approach**

My thesis is a textual analysis of the text, images, video, retweets, hashtags, and memes produced by the @BlkLivesMatter Twitter account from May 1 to August 31, 2015. I am electing to use this time period because it is a time in which Black Lives Matter movement leaders called for online and offline activism in the name of combating institutional and systemic violence against Black people. This time period is referred to by movement leaders as the Black Spring and followed the April deaths of Walter Scott, a 50-year-old black man, who was shot and killed as he was fleeing white North Charleston officer, Michael Slager; and Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old, black man killed as he was detained by police in Baltimore, Maryland. I included the summer months to capture all and any activity that may have come immediately after this period. Data was collected from this time period from this account to capture the ways in which the Black Lives Matter conversation changed over time.
Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for the thesis is the official Black Lives Matter Twitter account @BlkLivesMatter. Black Lives Matter functions under a decentralized model of leadership and relies on an expansive network of local leaders and organizations (Cooper 2015). The texts produced in the name of the organization are robust and difficult to isolate. Thus, @BlkLivesMatter as the organization’s Twitter feed functions as a central source of produced and managed content that is situated in a context that honors the movement’s origins in social media and ongoing activity. As of September 2016, @BlkLivesMatter currently has 168,000 followers and 8,907 tweets. The account is following 609 other Twitter accounts.

This thesis examines how the rhetoric produced by the Black Lives Matter’s official Twitter account and considers the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do tweets from the Black Lives Matter official Twitter account discuss and engage state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender women?

RQ 2: How do tweets from the Black Lives Matter official Twitter account, @BlkLivesMatter discuss and engage state-sanctioned against Black transgender women?

I am choosing to use a textual analysis for the purposes of this study because the method will help to elucidate the themes within the tweets from @BlkLivesMatter. To track specific instances of a recurring theme, sets of words, phrases, images, or other phenomena that may emerge, I used Nvivo. Nvivo is a qualitative software tool that imports various types of digital data and helps with the coding of that data, and various types of queries and analyses of the data.
Textual analysis has been identified as an ideal method for examining power and cultural representations of gender, race, class, and sexuality, as well as illuminating dissident messages embedded in dominant text (Duvall, 2012). Textual analysis has been used in nearly every medium and genre, producing insight into narratives, publications, programs, and visual images, while highlighting the ways in which cultural texts are connected and transmit cultural norms throughout society (Duvall, 2012).

Textual analysis helps to reveal themes in texts by deconstructing the texts and evaluating how they operate and are constructed, emphasizing the culture and context that produces meaning and consumes them (Lockyer, 2008). This includes knowing the myths, stereotypes, embedded norms, invisible identities or unquestioned realities that lie beneath the text. Textual analysis takes this even further as it also considers the time, place, and genre in which the text is situated, and the nature of the cultural industry in which the text circulates (Duvall, 2012). Related text in the form of images and texts that decodes and interrogates power hierarchies and inequity will be used as “intertexts” or texts that offer insight into how audiences interpret the primary text (McKee, 2003).

With consideration to the variety of possible interpretations of meaning, textual analysis also requires the researcher to be self-reflective and explain their subject positions and experiences with the text. I am a 29-year-old, queer, Black man reared in a rural Georgia community by a single, Black mother and witness to the inequities and social challenges faced by Black youth, men, and women, I, as the researcher, bring a direct and lucid awareness of how Black people are victims of state-sanctioned violence in multiple forms. I am a diversity educator and am a frequent user of social media and have worked in various marketing and communication professional roles to understand
the ways in which general audiences and organizations use social media networks, particularly Twitter, to engage topics of interest, establish collective identity, and mobilize around social and civic initiatives.

**Theoretical Framework**

This thesis as a textual analysis uses intersectional theory and virtual public sphere theories to interpret the text. Intersectionality theory asks researchers to consider the way power has clustered around certain categories or identity groups and is exercised against others (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality recognizes that gender, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and class are not mutually exclusive. Exercising an intersectional perspective as a researcher is important because race, gender, gender identity, sexuality, and class are central to the text included in the study. The theoretical lens will help uncover the ways in which @BlkLivesMatter discusses state-sanctioned violence beyond police brutality against cisgender Black men.

The Black Lives Matter movement’s presence on Twitter makes it a part of the virtual public sphere – a more globally connected and democratic online community than its offline counterpart. Lauren Langman, sociologist at Loyola University suggests, “The internet has fostered a greater awareness of often far-removed injustices and adversities.” Virtual public spheres illuminate information often kept secret and engenders progressive identities among participants with shared concerns for social justice as expressed in online discussions and in organizing and planning social actions (Langman, 2005). The virtual public sphere is comprised of individuals from many identities and organizations, including print, digital, and broadcast media. It amplifies more causes including feminism, gay rights, environmentalism, civil/human rights, and the sex trade, among
others in part because of the “low barriers to entry” on online platforms (Langman, 2005). While empowering many marginalized groups, the virtual public sphere is not void of dominant ideologies and also distributes oppressive messages that perpetuate violence against marginalized groups (Vlavo, 2012). This will be important to consider because Black Lives Matter operates largely in this context, which informs how it communicates from the official Twitter account.

**Sample and Data Collection**

Purposive sampling is used in this study to examine all the tweets from @BlkLivesMatter. Purposive sampling is when a researcher chooses data based on situational judgments about what individuals or texts should be surveyed to make for a useful or representative sample (Palys, 2008). Analyzing all of the tweets from @BlkLivesMatter is difficult because of the volume. Purposive sampling allows for a manageable dataset to conduct a comprehensive and factual textual analysis.

**Coding and Analysis**

Nvivo was used to collect and analyze the data in the study. Nvivo imported the tweets into their system, including elements such as the author and their location and number of followers. Hyperlinks to articles, images, and videos were captured as well as the number of retweets generated from an original tweet. The tweets and media content were not edited for grammar, spelling, spacing, punctuation or language, to ensure an authentic representation of the audience.

Nodes or themes in Nvivo were created based on the research questions in this thesis. Additional themes unrelated to the research questions emerged during the analysis and nodes were created to code the tweets from @BlkLivesMatter. The coding
scheme notes the existence and frequency of words, phrases, images, and text to determine the meaning and prominence of themes within the tweets (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). In accordance with textual analysis, themes were identified a priori or by using agreed upon professional definitions found in reviews of literature, theoretical orientations, commonsense constructs, researcher values and personal experiences (Bernard & Ryan, 2003). The themes were grouped into coherent categories that connect the results and data to the theoretical frameworks (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

**Justification for this Study**

When this thesis is considered in context of the communication discipline, there is limited scholarship on the Black Lives Matter movement and in particular the ways in which it discusses other forms of violence beyond police brutality against cisgender Black men. Much of the activities and conversation advanced under banner Black Lives Matter happens online, communicating social justice messages and organizing social actions to address state-sanctioned violence against black people. As a result, the national movement that has emerged from social media is worthy of examination in the communication discipline. This research also provides a better understanding of a contemporary social movement and the rhetorical forces needed to operate across spheres that impact public consciousness. The lessons revealed through a careful examination may also inform how scholars and media organizations cover and represent Black Lives Matter in their research, publications, and reports of the movement activities.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter one of my thesis provides an introduction to the Black Lives Matter and describes how my thesis will chart and contextualize how the rhetoric produced by the
Black Lives Matter organization discusses and engages state-sanctioned violence in the Black community beyond police violence against Black men. Relevant literature focused on Black Lives Matter, social movements, and Twitter are provided as evidence of the lack of research focused on this area.

Chapter two will describe my methodology, detailing the ways in which meaning was constructed using textual analysis and intersectionality. As the Black Lives Matter movement seeks to broaden the conversation around state-sanctioned violence to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state. I interrogate the degree to which the messages coming from @BlkLivesMatter focus on other forms of violence and the ways in which they discuss and engage state-sanctioned violence against cisgender and transgender Black women.

Chapter three will share the results from my findings on cisgender Black women, reporting the various ways in which the Black Lives Matter organization discusses and engages state-sanctioned violence against cisgender Black women. Details about the types of state-sanctioned violence will be shared along with supporting literature that provides an understanding of the violence. Online and offline social actions that served to challenge state-sanctioned violence against cisgender Black women will also be revealed along with any data showcasing the degree to which the Black Lives Matter deployed certain activities in support of cisgender Black women.

Similarly, my fourth chapter will examine the degree to which the Black Lives Matter organization discussed and engaged state-sanctioned violence against transgender Black women. Details about the types of state-sanctioned will be shared along with supporting literature that provides an understanding of how the violence uniquely impacts
transgender Black women. Online and offline social actions that served to challenge state sanctioned violence against transgender Black women will be reported along with data showing the degree to which the Black Lives Matter organization deployed social actions in opposition against the state in support of transgender Black women.

In my final chapters, I will conclude with a discussion of the implications of my thesis. There is limited scholarship on the ways in Black Lives Matter discusses other forms of violence. Further, my examination of a contemporary social movement’s support for cisgender and transgender Black women provides opportunities for understanding how social movements might leverage essential elements and/or operate to bring positive social change and transform public consciousness.
CHAPTER 2: METHOD

This chapter is organized into sections that describe the sample of selected tweets and the coding scheme and data analysis used to organize the tweets into themes.

Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of 825 tweets from the @BlkLivesMatter Twitter account from May 1st, 2015 to August 31st, 2015. Using Nvivo as my data collection tool, I was unable to import tweets from the aforementioned date range, so I imported all tweets posted from the @BlkLivesMatter account, an amount totaling 3,156 at the time of study, into the Nvivo system. These tweets were then filtered by date range which resulted in the 825 tweets examined for the study. Nvivo included elements such as the author and tweet location and the number of followers. Elements such as hyperlinks to articles, images, and videos were also captured as well as the number of retweets generated from an original tweet. The tweets and media contents were not edited for grammar, spelling, spacing, punctuation or language, to ensure an authentic representation of the audience.

Coding Scheme

Nodes or themes in Nvivo were created based on the research questions. The research questions ask how the @BlkLivesMatter Twitter account discusses and engages state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender and transgender women. Using textual analysis as my method for examining power and cultural representations of gender, race, class, and sexuality, I coded tweets to the gender identity addressed. Text, images, memes, hashtags or video content that identified state-sanctioned violence experienced by Black transgender or cisgender women as well as online and offline social actions to
address this violence were coded to their respective node. For instance, tweets coded to Black transgender women included references such as #BlackTransLivesMatters or #TransLiberation and that mentioned Black transgender women victims like Mya Hall, Brittany Flemming, among others. Tweets with specific references to Black cisgender women or victims identified as Black cisgender women such as Kindra Chapman, Miriam Carey, and others were coded to the cisgender Black woman node.

Black Lives Matter co-founders affirm that references to Black women include transgender Black women, so tweets that mentioned Black women, Black people, communities of color, or that included no identity but named examples of state-sanctioned violence were coded to Black transgender and cisgender women (Brydum, 2015). #SayHerName was a prominent hashtag used throughout the duration of the time period under study. The online and offline social actions surrounding this hashtag resulted from a report produced by the African American Policy Forum at Columbia University to lift up the stories of Black women killed by police. The victims highlighted in this report included Black transgender and cisgender women; therefore, tweets with this hashtag were coded to both the Black cisgender and transgender women unless there was a specific reference or incident impacting a Black cisgender or transgender woman. As a result of this coding scheme, 526 tweets out of the 825 (63.76%) during the Black Spring period discussed and engaged state-sanctioned violence against Black women.

Data Analysis

The coding scheme helped to identify themes repeatedly mentioned from the @BlkLivesMatter account that discussed and engaged state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender and transgender women. The coding scheme noted the existence and
frequency of words, phrases, images, hashtags, and text to determine the meaning and prominence of themes within the tweets (Auerback & Silverstein, 2013). The themes were grouped into coherent categories that connect the results and data to the theoretical frameworks (Auerback & Silverstein, 2013).

Law enforcement violence emerged as a form of state-sanctioned violence from the tweets examined in the study. Law enforcement included police officers, State officials, and immigration officers, among other agents of the State entrusted to enforce the law. These individuals are considered the “front line of the criminal justice system” and in many ways they identify who will be targets of “heightened surveillance and policing, enforcing systemic oppressions based on race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, immigrant status, class and ability” (Ritchie, 2006). The efforts on behalf of law enforcement contribute to the mass incarceration of Black people, a term used to describe the significant rise in imprisonment rates in the United States since the 1980s and the racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system (Richie, 2006). The racial disparities include inequalities in sentencing and the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in prisons and jails (Alexander, 2012). Tweets that mentioned racial profiling by police, violence and sexual assault by police, mass incarceration, deportation of Black immigrants, school to prison pipeline, and the criminalization of sex work were operationalized under the theme law enforcement violence.

Institutional discrimination was another key theme and tweets that emerged and discussed inequality in public education, wage inequality and employment discrimination, healthcare inequality, eroding public infrastructures and economic
development, poverty and homelessness, reproductive injustice, voter
disenfranchisement, and environmental racism were included under this term for state-
sanctioned violence. Institutional discrimination refers to the adverse treatment of and
impact on members of minority groups due to the explicit and implicit rules that
systemically advantage members of a particular group. Rules set and enforced include
those established by schools, government, markets, society, and firms or industry (Bayer,
2011). Institutional discrimination often results in the unfair distribution of resources,
impedes accessibility to decision making centers and networks, and denies opportunities
that affect people’s lives.

Intraracial violence emerged as another theme and included tweets specifically
addressing state-sanctioned violence that is inflicted by communities with identities that
align or closely link to Black cisgender and transgender women. Intraracial violence can
be attributed to systems reinforced by the state, and tweets operationalized under this
term are classified by the terms misogynoir and transmisogynoir. Misogynoir was coined
by Black feminist scholar Moya Bailey and describes the racialized sexism that Black
women face (Anyangwe, 2015). The experience is often overlooked in feminist discourse
as it tends to universalize womanhood to the experience of white women (Boom, 2015).
The racial and gender hatred that characterizes misogynoir can be perpetuated by Black
men and non-Black people. Several Black feminist scholars and writers consider Black
men as most involved in misogynoir (Anyangwe, 2015).

Similarly, transmisogynoir is the combination of racial and gender hatred and
transphobia. Transmisogynoir conforms to gender definitions that limit gender fluidity
and perpetuates views of femininity that consider transgender women “not woman
enough” or masculine (Wodda, 2014). Transmisogynoir can be exercised by non-Black people, Black men and cisgender Black women. Examples of this these types of intraracial violence includes physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner, discrimination by Black faith-based institutions and families, and toxic perceptions of masculine and feminine roles within the Black community (Shackelford, 2015).

Gender policing and erasure was another state-sanctioned violence theme identified in the tweets examined in this study. The term is operationalized by content that focused on: media misrepresentations of Black women in news stories, the struggle for visibility and acknowledgement of Black women victims of state-sanctioned violence and as leaders in the Black Lives Matter movement, and little to no safety protections in public spaces or accommodations for Black women. Gender policing refers to the ways in Black women are perceived not to comply with existing racialized norms of gender identity and expression (Richie, 2006). Gender policing feeds this notion of erasure. For Black women, historical and patriarchal ideologies that render them less than human and debase their capabilities with the promotion of hypersexual, animalistic, and masculine stereotypes often claim their victimization a result of their own circumstance and deny public recognition of how they are harmed and their significance (Maxwell, 2015). This erasure contributes to limited protections under the law and impedes inclusive approaches to tackle racist state-sanctioned violence because Black men are assumed as the only victims (Crenshaw, Richie, Anspach, Gilmer & Harris, 2015).

The final theme used to categorize state-sanctioned violence in this study was White supremacy and terrorism. White supremacy is defined as historical and institutionalized exploitation and oppression of people of color by people and nations of
European descent to maintain power, privilege, and wealth. (Sorrells, 2016). The underlying logic behind White supremacy is multi-faceted, including advancing the belief in racial superiority and arguing that people of color are genetically and intellectually inferior to Whites. (Brown, 2009) At times, white supremacist groups will use intimidation and acts of violence to terrorize Black communities and maintain this control. For instance, tweets under this theme reflected the online and offline response to the 2015 shooting of nine Black parishioners in Charleston, SC by a white, 19-year-old shooter Dylan Roof who was adorning clothes with white supremacist symbols (Brown, Perez, & Lemon, 2015).

Other tweets coded to this theme made explicit references to racism and white supremacy embedded into systems and structures of power that govern society and disadvantage those who fall beyond its prescribed behaviors and ideals. For instance, White supremacy in American has been institutionalized through systems that commodify and exploit Blacks for White economic gain. This is evidenced through the use slavery and subsequent iterations like sharecropping and mass-incarceration to criminalize and lease them as property of the State. Genocide and colonization of indigenous lands along with the notion that foreigners and other countries are threatening mandate extermination as necessary maintenance for the protection of White power. These actions reflect how White supremacy is institutionalized (Smith, 2006).

Additional content that emerged in the discussion of state-sanctioned violence against Black transgender and cisgender women included online and offline social actions. Social actions are described as strategies that empower individuals within community to take action against oppressive State or power structures for policy or social
change. The actions are often situated in context of a larger social movement or community organizing effort (Hyman, 1990). Social actions often involve conflict techniques, such as confrontation and direct action, in the form of non-violent rallies, marches, boycotts, press conferences, among other means to capture the attention of the state – all of which were coded as part of the study.

Additionally, social actions that involved hashtags for the spread of narrative, video, or image content were coded as social actions (Howard, 2015). #NoNewNYPD was an online social action used to circulate an online petition to the Mayor of New York City, opposing the funding of 1,000 New York City police officers. The effort also included images of New York City residents holding signage that offered alternative uses for the funding that would strengthen low-income, Black communities. Online chats in the form of facilitated question and answer sessions with movement leaders and their online followers as well as Google hangouts were coded as social actions. A variety of social actions were advanced through the Black Lives Matter Twitter account and will be shared in subsequent chapters.

In addition to coding content, I also used Nvivo to identify key authors of tweets most often mentioned in the advocacy and education of state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender and transgender women. To identify the authors, I conducted a word frequency query in Nvivo that scanned all the tweets coded to the Black cisgender woman node and then Black transgender woman node. The query ranked words by the amount of times they appeared in the coded tweets. Upon review of the query results, I identified the authors that appeared most often in the tweets and conducted a textual
analysis to determine the most salient examples of discussion and engagement of state-sanctioned violence against Black women.

The methodology and categories aforementioned provide the grounding for the results reported in the subsequent chapters. The limitations with textual analysis and purposive sampling are in the subjective interpretation and analysis of the researcher. While I have taken careful consideration to mitigate bias as much as possible in my study, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the personal nature of the process. As a Black, queer man writing about Black cisgender and transgender women, I enter into this conversation directly impacted by the racial and sexual oppression inflicted upon these two identities. However, as a man writing about the female sex and gender identities that that do not align with my own, I cannot claim or carry burden of the experience. I do my best to represent the experience through facts, personal narratives, and texts that are accessible to all. Additionally, due to limitations with the Nvivo system, many of the hyperlinks included in the coded content were broken and some of the content incomplete. I have done my best to capture the full content of the tweets given my understanding of the message.
CHAPTER 3: BLACK CISGENDER WOMEN RESULTS

The results in this section shed light on the ways in which the rhetoric from the @BlkLivesMatter Twitter account discussed and engaged state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender women. Of the 526 tweets about Black women, 304 (36.85%) discussed Black cisgender women. The account featured sixteen Black cisgender women who were victims of state sanctioned violence (See Appendix A), and 14% of tweets included social actions challenging state sanctioned violence against Black cisgender women.

Social Actions

Several social actions were used to advocate and give visibility to state-sanctioned violence inflicted upon Black cisgender women on the Black Lives Matter account. Chart 1 illustrates the various actions shared on the Twitter account and utilized by the Black Lives Matter organization.
Hashtags were frequently used to mobilize followers and raise awareness for the victims of state-sanctioned violence. Among the most used hashtags was #SayHerName. The hashtag highlighted the National Day of Action for Black Women and Girls activities on May 21 following the release of the Say Her Name Report. The hashtag also memorialized the lives of many Black cisgender women, including Miriam Carey and Sandra Bland.

Other hashtags included #BlackNarrativesMatter, which was used during a Twitter chat about the lack of visibility of black women in media reports on state sanctioned violence. Hashtags like #SheMatters, #BlackWomenMatter, #BlackWomenAreLeaders recognized the contributions of Black women organizers despite the lack of media coverage of their formation and direction of the Black Lives Matter movement activities. Tweets such as “Our MAU fam is being unjustly detained. Gather at 100 S. Central Ave NOW & call 314-615-5245 #FreeBrit #FreeAlexis http://t.co/mC9ORbh1k6” included hashtags that rallied followers of the Black Lives Matter account to advocate for the release of cisgender Black women in police custody following arrest for their community organizing efforts. #FreeBrownBlaze, the twitter name for Ashley Yates, a prominent leader and voice in the Black Lives Matter movement promoted her release with tweets such as, “RT @ergusonaction: #FreeBrownBlaze ..... Let Our Sister Go Now!!!!!” and “PLEASE RT: Call Santa Rita Jail: (925) 551-6500 and demand that Ashley Yates (@brownblaze) be released immediately!” Hashtags such as #SandraBland, #KindraChapman, #RekiaBoyd, #AiyannaJones, among many others named cisgender Black women who were victims of
state-sanctioned violence and sought to elevate their cases despite limited visibility in the national media.

Other Social Actions advanced on the Black Lives Matter account for cisgender Black women included the coordination and visibility of public demonstrations. For instance, RT @MillennialAU: Today, at 5:30, meet us at the History Museum, by the fountain. #SayHerName #SheMatters” and “RT @fergusonaction: Today is the day! Which #SayHerName action are you going to? List of actions: http://t.co/8wCKMCAxZ1 http://t.co/DrQubH” informed followers about organizing activities in their communities.

Tia Oso, national coordinator for the Black Alliance for Just Immigration in Phoenix, AZ, was instrumental in a public demonstration at the Net Roots National Conference in July 2015. Black Lives Matter organizers challenged Democratic presidential nominees, Bernie Sanders and Martin O’Malley to state their commitments to racial justice. The incident was widely covered and reported in news outlets such as CNN and The Guardian (Pengelly, 2015). Subsequently, the Bernie Sanders campaigned released their platform for racial justice and other candidates soon followed.

One of the most provocative public demonstrations tweeted from the account included protests by The BlackOUT Collective. The organization describes itself as “a full service Black Direct Action Collective, which provides on the ground support, training and the opportunity for deep space visioning in communities that prioritize the liberation of Black people.” (BlackOUT Collective). On May 21, 2015 as part of the #SayHerName National Day of Action for Black Women and Girls, the organizers gathered in the center of San Francisco’s financial district. Many of the women who are a part of the organization exposed their breasts, drawing on traditions from Nigeria, Gabon,
Uganda, and South Africa where women bared their chests and other parts of their bodies in protest to state and systemic oppression of black women (Misra, 2015). The topless social action also intended to show the dichotomy of treatment and coverage of black women and their bodies. In their view, barring their breast for justice directly challenged mainstream media’s dismissal of black women’s wellbeing and safety against the oversexualized and fetishized stereotypes it perpetuates about black women’s bodies. (Misra, 2015). See Figure 1 and Figure 2 below for images tweeted of the public demonstration.

Figure 1: Tweet including images from The BlackOut Collective public demonstration on May 21, 2015 in the San Francisco’s financial district.

Figure 2: Video tweeted from @BlkLivesMatter featuring The BlackOut Collective public demonstration on May 21, 2015 in the San Francisco’s financial district.

Social actions also helped build capacity for the movement as national meetings, conference calls, and trainings for community organizers were promoted on the Twitter account for those seeking ways to get involved with Black Lives Matter efforts. Tweets
like “RT @FergusonResp: #JusticeForRekia & all Black Women/Girls NATIONAL CONF CALL TUE 5/12 9PM EDT http://t.co/ugDkXsre03 @FergusonAction @blk” or “RT @mvmt4bl: REGISTER NOW! The 1st ever Movement For Black Lives convening #m4bl is just a few weeks away! http://t.co/IJZkJdjCbl http://t” are examples of very explicit ways the organization leveraged their Twitter account to mobilize supporters through diverse mediums and for offline action.

Art was also used as a social action. The tweet “RT @blackvoices: Poet Aja Monet confronts police brutality against black women with #SayHerName http://t.co/soAHcUqY8N http://t.co/hfxyHp3” is one example of how Black Lives Matter called attention to artists challenging the violence against cisgender Black women. The poem was covered and shared by the Huffington Post. In the same way, the #BlackoutFestival mentioned in this tweet, “#BlackoutFestival Next Saturday! See The Exciting Lineup of Film, Art, Music & Panels: http://t.co/mYZA6D1rrT & RT! http://t.co/4TTPJk2AyY” convened spoken word artists, musicians, celebrities, filmmakers, and visual artists to use their creative mediums to illuminate the various forms of state-sanctioned violence against black people. Similarly, the #ConjureCircle in partnership with the “Who Taught You How to Love Yourself? Black Womyn!” exhibit at the Omi Gallery in Oakland, CA was also shared via the Black Lives Matter Twitter account. The event promoted storytelling, performance art, and discussion to amplify the voices of Black women and call attention to the intersectional nature of state-sanctioned violence.

Memes and photographs such as those produced by Foremost (@4oremost), a visual artist often retweeted on the Black Lives Matter account, provided compelling
images affirming Black women as organizers. The memes and photographs shared from the account also honored victims of state-sanctioned violence, and promoted plans for public demonstrations. See figures 3 – 5 for examples.

Other examples of art as a part of public protests included a temporary garden planted in front of an Oakland, CA government building at the start of the Black Spring. The plants in the garden consisted of hundreds of handmade flowers with petals made of black construction paper, stems made from popsicle sticks, and images of black cisgender men.
and women victims of law enforcement violence as they eye or center of the flowers. See figure 6.

Figure 6: Flower garden memorializing victims of state-sanctioned violence in front of Oakland, CA government building

One demonstration of art activism shared through the tweet:

“http://t.co/tFU3qYz3CE? When your movement changes pop culture! #SayHerName.”

linked to an article and video of recording artists, Janelle Monet, and other artists on the Wondaland recording label performing their protest song, “Hell You Talmbout!” The song touted as giving the Black Lives Matter Movement “A Melodic Voice” in the
Huffington Post article calls attention to victims of law enforcement violence and vehemently demands for listeners to say the names of Black women and girls who are victims of state-sanctioned violence. Aiyanna Stanley-Jones, a 7 year old black girl, who was fatally shot by police as she slept on a couch in her family's Detroit home, Rekia Boyd, Sharonda Singleton, and Sandra Bland are all mentioned in the song.

Letter writing, online petitioning, and media relations in the form of press conferences also served as means to challenge the actions of state officials, including the Mayor of New York and his decision to hire new 1,000 new New York City Police Officers rather than investing in alternative ways to improve the community. “RT @dantebarry: Folks can sign the #NoNewNYPD petition: http://t.co/qP8pL8Ry97 and “write a letter to City Council: https://t.co/lUtYYHzEQ0 ” are two examples of the two social actions promoted on the account. Twitter Chats characterized by moderated online question and answer sessions with movement leaders and their followers and Google hangouts helped raise awareness of the imbalance in media coverage of Black cisgender women as victims of state-sanctioned violence and sourced strategies for remedying other types of violence inflicted upon them. “RT @drgoddess: @speakmynameproj @Blklivesmatter For example, it was #BlackTwitter who first and steadfastly kept #AiyanaJones in the news” and “Join the conversation tomorrow team! Google hang out link is on the right handside. http://t.co/l0EzIlloQ” are two examples from online conversations facilitated from the Black Lives Matter twitter account addressing the experiences of Black cisgender women.
State-Sanctioned Violence

Tweets addressing state-sanctioned violence against Black women totaled 22.42% with content coded under the themes white supremacy and terrorism, gender policing and erasure, law enforcement violence, intraracial violence, and institutional discrimination. Chart 2 below indicates the percentage of tweets focused on each form of state sanctioned violence.

![State Sanctioned Violence Against Cisgender Black Women](chart)

*Chart 2: Details the percentage of tweets discussing the types and degree to which state-sanctioned violence against cisgender Black women*

**White Supremacy and Terrorism**

Tweets that mentioned white supremacy and terrorism totaled 3.4% and included references to the Charleston, SC shooting that occurred on June 17, 2015: “Charleston, 8 dead, white gun person. Black Church” and “RT @jananamirah: @BlkLivesMatter We are currently setting up a vigil today in DC @ 7. DuPont Circle. Pls spread to your networks. @WashPeac…” Victims of the incident included nine Black parishioners, six
of whom were Black cisgender women, at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Black Lives Matter provided ongoing coverage of the incident as new developments emerged, “RT @AVAETC: Interesting. The suspect is unknown and at large. But already he being discussed as mentally ill? Oh, okay. #CharlestonShooting.” The unknown suspect was Dylan Roof, a white 19-year-old adorning clothes with white supremacist symbols and who opened fire on all of the victims during a prayer service.

Other mentions of white supremacy and terrorism as state-sanctioned violence against cisgender Black women included a series of tweets generated by @MillionHoodies, the user handle for Millions Hoodies Movement for Justice. The organization describes itself as a racial justice network to end mass criminalization and gun violence. On July 4, 2015, Million Hoodies launched a series of tweets denouncing prominent State officials by inducting them into a virtual “White Supremacy Hall of Shame.” Each tweet stated, “This #July4th, we dishonor the agents of white supremacy that lead to Black dehumanization in America” and included a photo that labeled the state official with a caption naming the type of state-sanctioned violence they advanced. State officials featured by the group included former President Bill Clinton, referred to as “Architect, Mass Incarceration,” former President George Washington, labeled “Slave Owner,” Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, African American, and considered, “Respectability Politics Love.” See figure 7 for an example of a meme from the series.
In addition to the tweets featuring state officials, other tweets focused on coverage of the June 27 social action by Bree Newsome, a 31-year-old, Black woman, who scaled a flag pole in front of the South Carolina capitol building to remove the Confederate Army battle flag. The Civil War symbol for the Confederate States of America is often appropriated by white supremacist and terrorists groups like the Ku Klux Klan. A tweet covering the incident stated, “RT @EdgeofSports: For those who asked for video of @BreeNewsome taking down the SC #ConfederateFlag... here it is. (@michelebdc) https://t” The hyperlink to the video was broken. Other tweets mentioning white supremacy and terrorism covered reports of six Black churches burned in the same week following the shooting at the Charleston, SC church. “Is that 6 black churches that have been burnt down? War against BLACK folk. White allies need to infiltrate white supremacist groups!” White supremacy as a factor of anti-Black racism and its traumatic mental health effects were also referenced through tweets such as “RT @BLM_TO: AntiBlack Racism within the Toronto police is killing Black ppl, criminalizing Black ppl, affecting mental health. #blacklivesmatter” and “RT @MinoWarrior: @LesegoMooketsi_ @BlkLivesMatter @aliciagarza is a great tonic against the psychological ravages of white supremacy.”
Gender Policing and Erasure

Tweets coded to gender policing and erasure totaled nearly 6% and emphasized the limited national mainstream media coverage of cisgender Black women as victims of state-sanctioned violence and as leaders in the Black Lives Matter movement. The “Speak My Name” project, a database collecting the names and stories of Black women and girls who were victims of state-sanctioned violence, in partnership with Black Narratives Matter, a resource for media on race literacy and how to cover #BlackLivesMatter, facilitated a Twitter chat on how to elevate the stories of Black women. Tweets from the conversation included prompts like: RT @BLKnarratives: Q4: Let’s uplift the Black women who need better coverage. #SayHerName so that media knows that #blacknarrativesmatter” that encouraged participants to lift the stories of Black women who needed better coverage. They chat also sourced tips for mainstream media to consider in their coverage of Black women: “Fam, BTW, @BLKnarratives and @speakmynametproj and us will be taking your feedback to the media. We are about change, not just talk.”

Most notably were the explicit references to resources and ways in movement leaders were taking alternative measures to lift up the names of Black cisgender women: “RT @speakmynametproj: Unidentified Sisters #SayHerName BlackNarrativesMatter. We currently have about 30 unidentified sisters. We hold them…” and “RT @Moore_Darnell: I co-created the Queer Newark Archive with Beryl Satter and to chronicle the stories of LGBTQ people in Newark. + https” and “Q5: black women, trans & GNC people r in leadership of this movement, yet are consistently erased. How can we make this leadership visible?” are examples from the conversation.
Intraracial Violence

Intraracial violence describes the racialized sexism that Black women face that goes unprotected by the state and totaled 4.6% of tweets. Examples of this type of violence included dismissed physical and sexual violence perpetrated by intimate partners, discrimination within Black faith-based institutions, and toxic perceptions of masculine and feminine roles within the Black community. Moya Bailey, a Black feminist scholar, and her work around misogynoir is often referred to in this section: “RT @ProfKFH: Thinking abt my student's struggle to get a wikipedia entry on misogynoir https://t.co/YRkpTSTQSn”. Misogynoir exists to characterize the racial and gender hatred perpetrated by Black men and non-Black people against Black women (Boom, 2015). Bailey writes that the experience of black women is often overlooked in feminist discourse as it tends to universalize womanhood to the experience of white women (Anyangwe, 2015).

Other examples of Intraracial violence against cisgender Black women focused on the fragility of Black masculinity and sexism as major factors in the marginalization and deaths of cisgender Black women as evidenced in tweets like “RT @Chuckkiieee: Discard the idea of "masculinity," since it is obviously fragile+encourages people to shame/be shamed https://t.co/6CAEw8” and “RT @Moore_Darnell: And men can't wait for cis and trans women to "mother" us into new understandings of anti-sexism. That's our work. https…” Interestingly, tweets also pointed to the implications and difficulties underlying the failure to challenge intraracial violence within the black community. For example, “Conversations about intraracial violence are not respectability or divisive, but about unity & true Black Power” and “RT @MinoWarrior: @Blklivesmatter Black masculinity is fragile instead of fighting against racist limitations they punch down at
BW gay, straight” Tweets like “RT @PurposefullyLJ: We need unlearning RE: effemiphobia/misogyny & how black church teaching contributes to violence #TBackInBlack https://” implicate the Black church or religious institutions within the Black community as major contributors to intraracial violence. These spaces, most often under the leadership of Black men, emphasize Black male flourishing while overlooking the suffering of Black women (Benbow 2016).

Law Enforcement Violence

Nearly 11% of the tweets made references to law enforcement violence against cisgender Black women during this time period. Tweets mentioned inequalities in sentencing and the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in prisons and jails:
RT @feminisimaaa: @BlkLivesMatter State-sanctioned violence= POC spending their lives behind bars for non-violent crime #TBackInBlack #BlackLivesMatter” and “On the 4th of July how does one understand freedom? 2.3 million people are in cages. We ain’t free til the whole team is free!” are two examples from the account.

Additionally, tweets directly addressed the privatization of prisons as a major factor in mass incarceration and relied on social actions that challenged 2016 Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Clinton’s campaign contributions from private prison lobby groups. Concerns were articulated as follows: “If @HillaryClinton is taking money from private prison lobbyists, what interest does she have in dismantling mass incarceration?” and “The future of both criminal justice reform and immigration are critical for private prison firms. So why is @HillaryClinton taking their $?.” The negative impact of mass-incarceration and police violence was also discussed on several occasions as evidenced by tweets like “http://t.co/8ZBalSs2QY Callous and Cruel, new report on the treatment of folks diagnosed with mental illness in jails and prisons” and “RT @Moore_Darnell: 25
Actual Facts About Police Brutality in America [http://t.co/qW28wLEXkb](http://t.co/qW28wLEXkb)” and “RT @BLM_TO: AntiBlack Racism within the Toronto police is killing Black ppl, criminalizing Black ppl, affecting mental health. #blacklivesmatter”

Frustration with police practices were also expressed in direct ways. “RT @mayalhassen: The Black ppl killed by police are just 1 piece of a larger structural

Figure 8: Statistics included in the Say Her Name report on police brutality against black women shared from @BlkLivesMatter

Figure 9: Image tweeted from @BlkLivesMatter featuring social action on May 21, 2015 at a police precinct problem by @osope @aliciagarza

@Moore_Darnell” and “RT @mychalsmith: if breaking a man’s spine, or shooting a woman standing in a crowd can be justified, pretty much any police act can/will be”

Racial profiling by police and physical violence and sexual assault by police dominated most discussions of law enforcement violence as illustrated in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

In May 2015, The African American Policy Forum at Columbia University released “Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women.” The report elevated the types of law enforcement violence experienced by Black women (Crenshaw Richie, Anspach, Gilmer, & Harris, 2015). Victims, statistics, and online and offline
social actions in the form of Twitter chats and public demonstrations across the country shared under the banner #SayHerName helped to illuminate these forms of violence and many of the findings from the report on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account.

Examples of the conversation included, “RT @BYP_100: The big brother of #RekiaBoyd @IAMRekiaBoyd explains why the #SayHerName actions today & tomorrow are so important. http://t” and “RT @BYP_100: Funeral procession from the African Burial Ground to City Hall, calling our names as we go #SayHerName #wereadynyc http://t.co…” and “RT @Dreamdefenders: Under Banner of 'Black Women and Girls Matter,' Wave of Protests to Sweep Country http://t.co/74SxofdmNo #SayHerName”.

Victims like Miriam Carey, a 34-year-old black mother with her 13-month-old daughter gunned down by Secret Service officers was discussed with coverage on the Twitter account: “RT @HuffPostLive: Miriam Carey's killing shows "elevation of property" over black life http://t.co/w7muO7NRxK #SayHerName.”

The Say Her Name report and several of the tweets during this time also alluded to the uniquely gendered ways in which Black cisgender women experience law enforcement violence. One tweet from @BlkLivesMatter declared, “RT @BYP_100: NYPD is a threat to reproductive, gender, & racial justice. They are the antithesis of peace #SayHerName #NoNewNYPD http://t.c” Trust Black Women Partnership, an organization supporting justice for girls and women of color, notes that a woman’s reproductive choices are directly linked to the conditions in her community. For Black cisgender women, law enforcement violence and other forms of institutional discrimination sanctioned by the state impacts their own lives, family members, and intimate partners. These conditions unfairly and systemically impact their decisions to
have children (Ross, 2011). Other forms of gendered violence included forced abortions for Black cisgender who have been incarcerated and sexual assault by officers who arrest them (Ross, 2011).

The physical violence inflicted on a young Black cisgender teenage girl in McKinney, Texas by a police officer in June 2015 was also covered under the Black Lives Matter account and garnered significant attention with the #SayHerName hashtag. The incident involved White, police corporal Eric Casebolt who pinned and pulled 15-year-old, Dajerria Becton, to the ground following a disturbance at a pool part in a McKinney subdivision (Holley, 2015). Video coverage of the incident shows the officer using expletives and pulling his firearm on several unarmed teens. Tweets from the Black Lives Matter account indicated, “#McKinney is a perfect example for why #SayHerName is absolutely necessary. We must stand up for ALL black women and girls!” and “Who is rageful about #McKinney? We are!!!!” The organization also shared images and a link to the video of the violent encounter. See figure 10 for a screen shot of the coverage on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account.

![Figure 10: Retweeted image of the violent treatment of cisgender Black teenage girl by a police officer in McKinney, TX](image-url)
Additionally, tweets shared from the Black Lives Matter Twitter account included references to Black cisgender women who were found dead in police custody, “RT @Russian_Starr: "5 Black Women Have Been Found Dead in Jail This Month." My report. http://t.co/zefMlfCS2l #SayHerName http://t.co/SLhGY” despite the lack of coverage in the mainstream media. Sandra Bland, 28; Kindra Chapman, 18; Raynetta Turner, 44; Joyce Curnell, 50; and Ralkina Jones, 37 all were Black cisgender women who died in police custody in July 2015 (Starr, 2015).

The most notable reports of a death in police custody on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account focused on Sandra Bland, a 28 year old Black cisgender woman who was pulled over for a “failure to signal” by white police officer, Brian Encinia in Texas. The encounter was captured on the officer’s dash cam and showed Sandra Bland being brutalized and arrested by the officer. (Nathan, 2016) While reports indicate that she suffered from depression, her suicide the following day in her jail cell triggered public outcry as shared on @Blklivesmatter. “When you wake up to the news of another Black Death. #SandraBland #SayHerName” and “RT @margaretcho: #SandraBland had everything to look forward to. She would not have ended IT. She’d have wanted to tell the TRUTH. #BlackLivesMatter.” Bland noted at the time of her incarceration that she suffered from depression due to the loss of a family member and a miscarriage, but was not placed under the care of a mental health professional or even hospitalized (Nathan, 2016). The physical abuse and negligence from the state and failure to follow their standard protocol given Bland’s health information contributed to public declarations of state-sanctioned violence.
Several hashtags such as #WhatHappenedtoSandraBland and #SandraBland as emerged as initial efforts of online activism shared on the Black Lives Matter account in response to Bland’s death. #IfIDiedInPoliceCustody was retweeted from the Black Lives Matter Twitter account and accumulated several posts as a somber response from black women and organizers about how they would like to be remembered if they were killed in police custody. One retweeted post from the Black Lives Matter account featured a woman declaring in a video, “If I die in police custody, don’t let me become another forgotten black woman. Say my name!” Offline social actions in the form of public demonstrations outside the police precinct where Bland died also were shared from the Black Lives Matter account and the organization offered support for local organizers as seen in this exchange with @rhyism_: “RT @rhyism_: Back out for the 2nd day in a row. We want answers. #WhatHappenedToSandraBland #SandraBland #BlackLivesMatter http://t.co/Hsj”. Black Lives Matter reached out with “@rhyism_ what support can Black Lives Matter lend you?” The connection brokered through the Twitter is a powerful demonstration of support and coordination of offline advocacy for Black cisgender women through Black Lives Matter’s account.

Coverage of the deportations of Haitian workers from the Dominican Republic served as examples of racial profiling by immigration officers and brought attention to another area of emphasis for Black Lives Matter – immigration reform. “RT @blackimmnetwork: Stop arbitrary deportations of Dominicans of Haitian descent, says UN http://t.co/iGe5W22pOW #Rights4AllinDR Join: htt” and “RT @blackvoices: It's time for a global movement to stop anti-black racism in the Dominican Republic -- by @opalayo/@blackimmnetwork http:///” were tweets shared in accordance with a National
Day of Action on July 1, 2015 to challenge the deportations of Haitian workers under the hashtag #Rights4AllinDR: “RT @Dominicanxs: DAY OF ACTION for Dominicans of Haitian descent & Haitians in DR 7/1 - organize in your city #BlackLivesMatterInDR https://”

According to a June 2015 article in the New York Times, Haitian workers, many of whom were Black women, crossed the Dominican border for decades to “cut sugar cane, clean homes and babysit,” and long experienced racial tensions and economic exploits by their wealthier Dominican neighbors (Ahmed, 2015). A ruling in 2013 by the Dominican Republic constitutional court removed the citizenship of children born to Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic as far back as 1929 and fueled tensions between the two countries even more (Ahmed, 2015). The results from the decision included a bureaucratic and tedious process that required many Haitian migrant workers to acquire citizenship by applying for residency; however, employers were reluctant to provide work permits to some and other measures created challenges for those seeking to remain in the country (Archibold, 2014). Human rights groups responded as more than 200,000 Haitian workers faced ejection from the country and were being targeted and identified by their darker skin (Archibold 2014).

Advocacy for immigrant justice also included tweets that highlighted the systemic inequities and hardships experienced by immigrants who have interactions with law enforcement and the need to examine immigration laws. For instance, “RT @britrican: If I'm locked up w/o due process and deported to a place I don't know, I'd hope one of yall would yell at the prez. #NotTooProud” and “the decriminalization of certain activities that are currently proscribed by criminal laws or the loosening of immigration laws”
speaks to how private prisons are adversely affected by changes in existing criminal or immigration laws. (Sudbury, 2014) The references alluded to in the tweet indicates the degree to which immigrants are targeted and jailed as a result of their race and marginalization in American society.

Lastly, discussions of immigrant justice involved conversation among movement leaders in the United States, Israel, and Palestine about the treatment of Ethiopians in Israel. Ethiopians are racialized as a Black minority group in Israel and face similar challenges in terms of economic mobility, racial discrimination, and other forms state-sanctioned violence as Black people in America. The video chat promoted through @Blklivesmatter occurred on June 27, 2015 via Google Hangout, a video conference technology that allows Google users to participate in video chats with other users from any location. Tweets promoting the talk encouraged users to “Join the conversation tomorrow team! Google hang out link is on the right handside. http://t.co/l0EzIlIoQI”. Patrisse Cullor, co-founder of Black Lives Matter moderated the conversation in partnership with the Dream Defenders, a community organizing network with similar aims as Black Lives Matter as they declared through tweets, “RT @Dreamdefenders: @osope asks what it is like to live as a Black person within Israel and the risks in speaking out against racism there.” The entire chat was video recorded, archived on YouTube, and shared on the Black Lives Matter account. The fact the organization hosted this type of international conversation underscores its objectives to dismantle anti-black racism not only in the United States but across the world.
Institutional Discrimination

Tweets covering institutional discrimination against cisgender black women resulted mostly from the #NoNewNYPD campaign on May 5, 2015. Safety Beyond Policing, a network of New Yorkers and community organizations including Black Lives Matter, advanced the effort with the understanding that healthier neighborhoods are achieved by addressing poverty and not hiring more police officers. Tweets from @Blklivesmatter addressed inequities in healthcare as seen here: “RT @nonewnypd: We need health care. Not 1K new cops. #NoNewNYPD http://t.co/q9gkestHJk.” Others drew attention to disparities in infrastructure developments and improvements to public transportation – which are vital for access to opportunities, job growth, and economic stability in low income communities of color. For example, a tweet retweeted from @Blklivesmatter indicates, “RT @sideeyelex: #NoNewNYPD work on accessibility in this city- full fleet of accessible buses, fix up some subway stations, make sure sidewalks,” while another discusses repairs to the transit system, “RT @nonewnypd: We don't need 1K cops, we need #NYCHA repairs. SIGN this petition today http://t.co/9zfOYSnFnv http://t.co/faZKrblKmW.” Additionally, tweets mentioned the need to improve overall community healthcare as evidenced by the tweet, “RT @BYP_100: .@MMViverito the $100M PER YEAR that those 1K new cops cost can go to health, housing, jobs, our communities. #SayHerName #NoN…” and “RT @nonewnypd: Instead of 1K new cops, how about fully funded community #healthcare ?? #NoNewNYPD http://t.co/XwpFyMHBnM” and “RT @ImaniBrown20: Community gardens that aren’t pitted against affordable housing, because poor Black folks need green space too #NoNewNYPD”
Tweets also included images of Black women advocating for alternative community solutions, including livable wage jobs, economic development, and affordable housing. See figure 11 below.

![Image of Black woman participating in the #NoNewNYPD campaign shared on @BlkLivesMatter](image)

**Figure 11: Image of Black woman participating in the #NoNewNYPD campaign shared on @BlkLivesMatter**

Other demands included request for investment into public schools and education, as they are often neglected in low income communities that are disproportionately Black and becoming more privatized. “RT @SojournerSeeds: The closing and privatization of public education... #fightfordyett [https://t.co/CmnEMP3O73](https://t.co/CmnEMP3O73)” and “RT @DRichFIT: Helloooo? Got it? #NoNewNYPD! We NEED qualified #Teachers in "over-tested under-resourced" schools. #TeachersMatter” and “RT @ MillionHoodies: #NoNewNYPD We want the $100 million to be spent on more resources for our schools and teachers. [http://t.co/KA9BbNv6oy](http://t.co/KA9BbNv6oy)” are examples of the advocacy against education inequality.

Demands for economic investment were also shared on the Black Lives Matter, including tweets such as “RT @nonewnypd: Money for small businesses instead of 1k cops. #NoNewNYPD SIGN this petition today [http://t.co/9zfOYSnFvn](http://t.co/9zfOYSnFvn) [http://t.co/hxS4WL...](http://t.co/hxS4WL...)” and “RT @nonewnypd: JOBS instead of 1k cops. #NoNewNYPD
SIGN this petition today http://t.co/9zfOYSnFnv http://t.co/ghXaUhFWuF

Other alternative solutions drew attention to the need for more homeless shelters, “RT @nonewnypd: We don't need 1K new cops, we need homeless shelters! #NoNewNYPD http://t.co/1uf566FnER” and affordable housing, “RT @nonewnypd: Instead of 1K new cops, let's have more affordable housing. #NoNewNYPD http://t.co/3S3qPh8ZaZ” The various ways in which Black people, particularly those from urban, low-income areas, experience institutional discrimination and allocated inequitable community resources were on full display from the Black Lives Matter account during the Black Spring period.

Prominent Twitter Voices and Organizations

I identified the top 10 accounts out of 166 mentioned in the advocacy for Black cisgender women on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account. The personal Twitter accounts for Black Lives Matter co-founders, Alicia Garza (@aliciagarza), Patrisse Cullors (@osope), and Opal Tometi (@opalayo) together comprised nearly 10% of the mentions in tweets from Black Lives Matter. Aside from the movement founders, Ashley Yates (@BrownBlaze) and Darnell Moore (@Moore_Darnell) were individuals most often mentioned in discussions about Black cisgender women. Yates, an organizer, writer, and artist from Florissant, Missouri was an early on-the-ground organizer in Ferguson who quickly stepped into leadership (Yates, 2016). See Figure 12 for an image of Yates. Mentions of her totaled 3.3%, while Darnell Moore mentions totaled 3%. Moore is a Senior Editor and Senior Correspondent at Mic, an online new source with an audience of more than 30 million people. He is also co-managing editor of The Feminist Wire and Writer-in-Residence at the Center on African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice at Columbia University (Mic, 2016). These individuals were
most represented in the discussion and engagement of state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender women.

The organizations most often involved in discussion and engagement of state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender women included @NoNewNYPD, the Twitter account for Safety Beyond Policing, with mentions totaling 4.6%. The Speak My Name Project (@speakmynameproj) along with Black Narratives Matter (@Blacknarratives) mentions totaled close to 8% of tweets due in part to the Twitter chat the two organizations facilitated from the Black Lives Matter account. Black Youth Project (@byp_100), the activist member-based organization of Black 18-35 year olds, dedicated to creating justice & freedom for all Black people had mentions totaling 3.3%. The organization was very instrumental in the organization and promotion of the #SayHerName and #NoNewNYPD social actions. Million Hoodies Movement for Justice, represented by @Millionhoodies on Twitter, comprised 3.3% of the conversation from the Black Lives Twitter, while tweets from the Los Angeles Chapter of the Black Lives Matter network (@blmla) totaled more than 1.6% and sourced details from

Figure 12: Retweeted image from @Bklivesmatter of community organizer, Ashley Yates, who is also known as @BrownBloze
followers about incidents of police violence. For instance, “RT @BLMLA: Contact us w
any info. 3235973221 #HighAlert #BlackLivesMatter #SayHerName
https://t.co/Y0yIO4K6Lb” and tweets such as “Our @BLMLA chapter members were
pepper sprayed alongside folks from @BYP_100 and many others. We are in a state of
emergency. #M4BL” exemplifies how Black Lives Matter used twitter to source and
report details of law enforcement violence.

Other notable organizations not represented in the top 10 but active in the
advocacy for Black cisgender women included Ferguson Action (@fergursonaction), an
organized movement to resist police violence. They helped advance the #SayHerName
actions and #FreeBrownBlaze effort to release Ashley Yates from police custody. The
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights @ellabakercenter), an organization aimed at
breaking cycles of incarceration and poverty, also was retweeted and mentioned on
occasion and helped promote the Mobile Justice Application, a tool developed by the
American Civil Liberties Union to record and report inappropriate actions of law
enforcement. Essence Magazine (@essencemag), a news and lifestyle magazine created
exclusively for Black Women, and Terrell Starr (@Russian_Starr), a reporter for
Alternett and Fusion, two independent and progressive media organizations, represented
news outlets and media professionals often retweeted for their coverage of the Black
Lives Matter movement and violence against Black cisgender women. And lastly, Ava
Duvernay (@AVAETC), critically acclaimed, Black woman director, helped bring
attention to the Charleston shooting from her account and was retweeted from
@Blklivesmatter.
CHAPTER 4: TRANSGENDER BLACK WOMEN RESULTS

The results in this section shed light on the ways in which the rhetoric from @BlkLivesMatter discusses and engages state-sanctioned violence against transgender Black women. Of the 526 (63.76%) tweets about Black women, 472 (57.21%) discussed transgender Black women. Thirteen transgender women were named as victims of state-sanctioned violence (See Appendix B), and 16% of all tweets during the Black Spring period included social actions challenging state sanctioned violence against transgender Black women.

Social Actions

The Black Lives Matter organization promoted and advanced a variety of social action to challenge state-sanctioned violence against Black transgender women. Chart 3 illustrates the actions and the degree to which some actions were used more than others.

Chart 3: Online and offline social actions discussed to challenge state sanctioned violence against Black transgender women
Hashtag activism was the most utilized form of engagement against the state-sanctioned violence inflicted transgender Black women. Similar to the advocacy for cisgender Black women, #SayHerName memorialized and elevated the names of victims of state-sanctioned violence despite limited media visibility as seen in tweets like, “#SayHerName Amber Monroe. Shade Schuler. Elisha Walker. Kandis Capri. Ashton Ohara. We won't forget Black Trans Women. Ever.” What’s notable about the use of #SayHerName is the inclusive and intentional nature of the hashtag in uniting the experiences of Black cisgender and transgender under one banner. This is no more explicit that in the retweeted statement from the Black Lives Matter account, “RT @Nettaaaaaaa: And when I say BLACK WOMEN that includes BLACK TRANS WOMEN. #SayHerName.” Similarly, #BlackNarrativesMatter invited followers to speak on the many ways are Black transgender women are rendered invisible in society and sourced solutions for the media to elevate their stories and experiences.

Additionally, #SayHerName served as a call to online and offline action for Black transgender women along with Black transgender specific hashtags such as #BlackTransLivesMatter, #TBackinBlack, and #TransLiberationTuesday. These hashtags drew attention to the unique violence experienced by Black transgender women as discussed in Twitter chats and offline action on #TransLiberationTuesday, Black Lives Matter’s National Day of Action for Black transgender women that occurred on Tuesday, August 25, 2015. The Twitter Chat hosted by Black Lives Matter organizers was an important element of #TransLiberationTuesday and facilitated an online exchange articulated the ways in which transgender Black women experience various forms of
state-sanctioned violence. Figure 13 is a meme poster used to promote the Twitter chat on #TransLiberationTuesday to followers.

#TransLiberationTuesday included 20 public demonstrations across the country from Portland, Oregon to Atlanta, Georgia that sought to call attention to the 16 transgender women of color, though mostly transgender Black women, murdered at that time. Figure 14 shows a map of the offline social actions organized for Trans Liberation Tuesday. Tweets from the Black Lives Matter account helped mobilize and coordinate followers to join local organizers in protest against the violence inflicted on Black transgender women. “RT @ColemanSF1: Tomorrow (Tues) at 6pm Civic Center Plaza SF take action for #BlackTransLiberationTuesday  https://t.co/ELwIEOJTh3” and “RT @centerblacklgbt: Now #TBackInBlack. 6:30pm #BlackTransLivesMatter Rally."
"#TransLiberationTuesday #BlackLivesMatter #TBackInBlackDC #DC" are just two examples of the social action organized by Black Lives Matter.

Figure 14: Screenshot from #TransLiberationTuesday.org that depicts all the offline social actions organized as part of the day of action.

Another notable offline social action included a public demonstration in Cleveland, Ohio at a Hillary Clinton campaign rally. Organizers from Black Lives Matter and Get Equal, an organization that empowers the LGBTQ community to take action to demand full legal and social equality, used signage and voiced demand that Hillary Clinton divest from private prisons and invest in Black transgender women. Tweets shared on Black Lives Matter reported the action through a video to followers and shared a press release with details of the action and references to three Black Trans women, including Cemia Dove, a black transgender woman killed in Cleveland. The press release reflects an intentional effort by Black Lives Matter to articulate its aims and control the narrative surrounding the organization’s efforts. The release stated, “The actions that took
place across the country on Tuesday were a call for cisgender Black folks to show up for Black trans people; we’re here to demand that Clinton divest from private prisons in solidarity with our Black trans family.” (Get Equal, 2015). It goes on to add, “These companies and their lobbyists profit from the incarceration and abuse of Black people, especially Black trans women -- an overwhelming 41% of Black trans women report having been arrested at some point in their lives, often after having been profiled by the police” (Get Equal, 2015).

Other social actions included public demonstrations advanced under the #SayHerName National Day of Action, which elevated police killings of Black transgender women like Mya Hall, a transgender black women murdered by security at the National Security Administration building after taking a wrong turn into the organization’s headquarters, and Yazmin Payne, 33-year-old black transgender woman, was found fatally stabbed in a burning Los Angeles, CA apartment. Actions also included organizer advocacy and phone calls for support as evidenced by the tweet, “RT @LBSBaltimore: Urgent! Trans Bmore protesters are being held in inappropriate facilities. Call the mayor at 4103964900 to demand their rights” as well as capacity building through Black Lives Matter network meetings as seen here, “Join us for an emergency call tonight at 9pm EST #DefendBlackTransWomen #BlackLivesMatter http://t.co/AiqNppYejiw.”
Art as a social action also served as a means for calling attention to the state sanctioned violence against Black transgender women. The account tweeted requests for collaboration among transgender justice organizations and activists for Transgender Day of Remembrance. A Black transgender activist also used her fashion to name the mourning happening within the LGBTQ community as a result on ongoing state-sanctioned violence against Black transgender women. See figure 15 and 16 below.

Figure 15: Screenshot of Meme poster advocating for Black Transgender Women shared on @Bklivesmatter

Figure 16: Dress adorned by a transgender activist and designed by Toronto artists to mourn the loss of Black transgender people.
State-Sanctioned Violence

Tweets addressing state-sanctioned violence against Black transgender women totaled 27.88% with content coded under the themes white supremacy and terrorism, gender policing and erasure, law enforcement violence, intraracial violence, and institutional discrimination. Chart 4 below indicates the percentage of tweets discussing Black transgender women in context of each form of state-sanctioned violence from May 1 to August 31.

**Chart 4: Details the percentage of tweets discussing the types and degree to which state-sanctioned violence against transgender Black women was discussed on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account**
White Supremacy and Terrorism

Tweets that mentioned white supremacy and terrorism reflected a commitment to combat dominant systems of white supremacy and heteronormativity that restrict the fullness of Black humanity and Black transgender identity. Tweets like “RT @YouthJusticeLA: #BlackTransLivesMatter We must lovingly and openly protecting our most vulnerable communities to white heteronormative” made explicit reference. Similarly, tweets such as “RT @whisperwind22: @BlkLivesMatter breaking apart systems vs buying into them. Rejecting assimilation. Deconstructing internal bias.#TransLivesMatter” and “RT @PoeticPuddle: Educating on general trans issues + educating on systemic racism + then integrating the two into one conversation https://…” point to standards imposed and institutionalized by white supremacy. For instance, in a Western ideal, the standard of beauty is primarily represented as a thin, blonde, White cisgender woman, which Black cisgender and transgender women are regulated outside the bounds of because of their racialized identity (Deliovsky, 2008). Additionally, references to assimilation within institutions and systems that perpetuate white supremacy is critically and cleverly examined through Million Hoodies White Supremacy Hall of Shame.

Gender Policing and Erasure

Tweets under the gender policing and erasure theme illuminated the many ways in which this form of state-sanctioned violence impacts Black transgender women. Many tweets name transmisogynoir and invisibility in the media as key factors in several retweets from the Black Lives Matter account, including: “RT @whisperwind22: @BlkLivesMatter leave no room for transmisogynoir. In tv, online, advertising. Stop allowing harm to be normalized #TranLivesMatter,” “RT @aisha_nicole_: Make sure
that every media reporting about the work includes their names. Make them front & center #TBackInBlack https://,” and “RT @keepitriel: State sanct. violence is overwhelming silence from mainstream media over & over & over again #BlackTransLivesMatter.” Visibility in the media and making sure positive and accurate representations of Black transgender women dominated most of the discussion. Tweets proclaimed emphatically, “RT @krescate: The names of women or trans people or gender nonconforming folks should never be forgotten. #TransLiberationTuesday https://”

Other instances of gender policing and erasure referenced ways in which the gender binary is enforced in public spaces and Black transgender identity is considered socially unacceptable and invisible. Tweets declared, “RT @nappy_techie: @Blklivesmatter put our resources towards safer public space & directly address toxic masculinity w/ black cis men #TBackinBlack,” and “RT @Idee_fixe_: Prioritize black trans womens safety in largely cis spaces. Make sure she's comfortable when you are hanging out. https://”. Other tweets emphasized ways to disrupt the binary as seen in the tweet, “RT @brownblaze: By forcing space where my trans family has been erased and SHUTTING SHIT DOWN. https://t.co/psXRxj51JB #TBackinBlack.” This particular tweet linked to video of the LGBTQ Task Force Creating Change Conference where Black Lives Matter organizer, Ashley Yates, invited Black Transgender women and men to the stage during her remarks to give visibility and voice to their own experience.

Black Lives Matter did not shy away from critically examining its own practices and sourced recommendations from followers to ensure it was inclusive. Tweets like “Q5: black women, trans & GNC people r in leadership of this movement, yet are consistently erased. How can we make this leadership visible?” Responses included “RT
LeslieMac: A3: Ensure ALL movement spaces are SAFE SPACES for #BlackTransLives #TransLiberationTuesday #TBackInBlack https://t.co/ELwK1” and “RT @YOUNGBLACKANGST: @Blklivesmatter using a Black Queer Feminist lens to lift up the stories of #BlackTransWomen.” Black Lives Matter also shared personal reflections and stories from prominent Black transgender activists such as those from Cherno Biko and Raquell Willis covered on Buzzfeed and also stories from the Washington Post that profiled the lives of Black transgender women. These tweets and many others reposted from the account demonstrate an intentional effort at ensuring Black transgender women were recognized for their leadership and central to the organization’s movement activities.

Law Enforcement Violence

Coverage of law enforcement violence against Black transgender women totaled nearly 12% -- the highest reported and discussed form of state-sanctioned violence against Black women on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account. Many of the tweets overlapped with the discussions of law enforcement violence against Black cisgender women. However, there were very explicit mentions of law enforcement violence against Black transgender women, including statistics about the brutalization and racial profiling. “35% of Black trans people report being arrested or held in a cell due to anti-trans bias #BlackTransLivesMatter” and “29% of Black trans people who went to jail or prison reported being physically assaulted while in custody #BlackTransLivesMatter” as well as “32% of Black trans people report being sexually assaulted while in custody. #BlackTransLivesMatter” illuminate the harsh treatment and degree to which Black transgender women experience various forms law enforcement violence. When
incarcerated for extended periods, Black transgender women face horrible conditions as discussed in tweets like “RT @brownboiproject: @BlkLivesMatter state sanctioned violence is placing TW in solitary confinement in male prisons for their "safety" #BlackTransLivesMatter.”

Profiling rates for Black transgender women are staggering as discussed on @Blklivesmatter through tweets like “41% Black trans women report being arrested at some point, often after having been profiled by the police #BlackTransLivesMatter” and many are profiled as sex workers. For transgender Black women, societal stigmatization and employment discrimination forces some of them to rely on an underground economy for survival which includes the sale of sexual services. Criminalizing this work in a society that does not provide lawful protections for transgender identified persons is a form law enforcement violence (Harrison-Quintana, Lettman-Hicks, Grant, 2012). Tweets like “RT @brownblaze: State sanctioned violence is Black trans women sex workers getting arrested after being fired for their identity. https://” and “RT @Adamant_Yves: Criminalizing sex work is a huge part of state-sanctioned violence against trans Black women. #BlackTransLivesMatter http” highlight the commentary from Black Lives Matter around criminalized sex work.

Additional coverage of law enforcement violence included tweets about the Haitian deportation from the Dominican Republic and experience of Ethiopians immigrants in Israel. I elected to include this in the law enforcement violence theme for Black transgender women because the actions by the government impacted all people of Haitian and Ethiopian descent and did not specify gender identities that were impacted by their decision. Other coverage also included the social actions conducted by the Black
OUT Collective on May 21, 2015. There advocacy included support very explicit for Black transgender women. I also coded the #NoNewNYPD online social to the Black transgender woman theme because of the inclusive nature of their broad community building alternatives to the New York City’s mayor 100 million dollar investment to hire more New York City police officers.

*Institutional Discrimination*

The #TransLiberationTuesday and #NoNewNYPD Twitter chats illuminated several ways in which transgender Black women face institutional discrimination, including denial of housing, employment, healthcare, and quality education. Tweets from movement leaders and organizers stated, “RT @Moore_Darnell: @BlkLivesMatter State harm? Unchecked employment/housing discrimin impacting trans folk to institutional barriers. #BlackTransLivesMatter” and “RT @Idee_fixe_: How trans women of color are continually denied employment. housing, access to crisis centers https://t.co/sywWL18Qsr” as well as “RT @ebmore: @BlkLivesMatter State-sanctioned violence = willful neglect in education, housing, employment, and safety. #BlackTransLivesMatter” illustrate the many ways Black transgender women are barred from important community resources. See figure 17 for example.
Education and healthcare inequality were also discussed on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account. One retweeted comment from the Black Lives Matter Twitter account mentioned, “RT @PPBlackComm: Sex ed must include and honor all of the ways people love including LGB & trans-attraction are good #TBackInBlack https://…” while another stated, “RT @rickysimone: @Blklivesmatter Respect is 1st, need more #cisgender advocates 4 #trans in the workplace & create more scholarships 4 high school trans youth.” Zero-tolerance conduct policies and gender policing through dress codes that enforce gender binaries and that prevent same-sex affection contribute to schools being hostile and unsafe climates for transgender Black girls. These factors among others including bullying most often lead to transgender Black girls skipping school or dropping as well as increased contact with the juvenile system because they choose to fight back against physical and verbal assaults. (Hanssens, Moodie-Mills, Ritchie, Spade, Vaid 2014).
Intraracial Violence

In an article penned by transgender women of color activists and organizers for Ebony Magazine on #TransLiberationTuesday, they reported at least seventeen transgender women of color had been found dead in 2015. (#TEAMEBONY, 2015) And in the week prior to the article being published, five women were killed, and three of the bodies were found on the same day August 14, 2015. The victims included: Amber Monroe, Ashton O’Hara, Elisha Walker, Kandi Capri, and Tamara Dominguez. Circumstances surrounding many of the deaths included murders by intimate or domestic partners – most being Black men (#TEAMEBONY, 2015).

The #TransLiberationTuesday chat hosted on the Black Lives Matter account revealed the endemic nature of this form of intraracial violence as one Twitter user declared, “RT @Adamant_Yves: Anyway, we need to treat this like we treated Mike Brown's death. Black cis-hetero men are often OUR Darren Wilsons. http....” The user’s reference is an indictment of Black cisgender heterosexual men as equal to white police officers responsible for the murders of unarmed black men. The public response in the case of White officers killing unarmed Black men often takes shape in the form of protests and ongoing scrutiny of police forces, while intraracial violence against Black transgender women goes unreported and received limited to no social action from members of the Black community. The Black Lives Matter account also asked participants in the Twitter chat, “many Black trans women are murdered by black cis men. How do we address this violence in Black Communities? #TbackinBlack #SayHerName”. Responses included, “RT @rmnetwork: By working to rid religious communities from teachings that make cis men feel ashamed of being with trans women
“RT @thekingjobe: Having hard conversations & letting black men know that trans women are women & loving them isn't a shameful thing. https.” Both called attention to the pervasive ideologies that tell cisgender men that transgender women are shameful and that the attraction comprises their sexual identity (Mock, 2013).

Other tweets spoke about the need to examine abusive language and named Black cisgender’s role in intraracial violence. Tweets suggested followers “RT @iamLexKennedy: @BlkLivesMatter we call out the violence every time we see it frm the catcalls on the street to TW being jumped on Metro” and “RT @sunnydaejones: @BlkLivesMatter Use proper pronouns even in their absence. Don't go back to misgendering when they're not around. #TransLivesMatter.” When referring to Black cisgender women, participants stated, “RT @PPBlackComm: Cis Blk wmn are also in partnership w/ trans-attacked men & enable their transmisogyn. This must stop #TBackInBlack https….” Another user asserted, “RT @RaquelWillis_: @QueenAnkh @BlkLivesMatter our culture fosters insecurity in cis black women to be threatened by black trans women. #TBack…” The user continued, “RT @RaquelWillis_: @QueenAnkh @BlkLivesMatter We need to hold cis black women accountable for their part in our death #BlackTransLivesMatter.”

Other examples of intraracial violence included tweets that referred to the exclusion of transgender identities in social justice movement spaces or LGBTQ organizations. Tweets such as, “RT @Chuckkkieeee: Emphasize the importance of accepting the ENTIRE black community before you try to defend it https://t.co/6CAEw8mCLq” and “RT @rickysimone: @BlacklivesMatter I can do better by recognizing & calling out #discrimination w/i the #LGBT community
#TBackinBlack” are examples. One powerful response to the lack of inclusion on the Black Lives Matter account was on June 13, 2015. Black LGBT activists staged a public demonstration in the middle of the Boston, MA Pride parade and demanded that Black transgender women be welcomed as leaders and represented in Boston Pride activities and planning. They also launched a corresponding hashtag #WickedPissed in opposition to Boston Pride’s #WickedProud (Broverman, 2015). A tweet from the Black Lives Matter declared, “http://t.co/AJ9h1bVdGS @BLM_Boston and allies shut down Boston Pride #WickedPissed good work, team!” More evidence of the frustration can be seen in several tweets from users who emphasize “prioritizing trans women safety in largely cis spaces,” and tackling “sexism, cis/trans misogyny and stale understandings of gender even among movement folk.” The neglect exercised by LGBT groups in addition to the deadly impact of transmisogynoir by Black cisgender men and women characterized the discussions of intraracial violence against Black transgender women on the Black Lives Matter Twitter account.

Prominent Voices and Organizations

Many of the advocates for cisgender black women were also heavily involved in the discussions of state-sanctioned violence Black transgender women. Darnell Moore and Ashley Yates both engaged in the #TransLiberationTuesday online and offline activity. Moore, who was mentioned in more than 5% was the most active. He offered ways in which cisgender men and journalists could provide support Black transgender women, including sharing examples of his own advocacy work: “RT @Moore_Darnell: I co-created the Queer Newark Archive with Beryl Satter and to chronicle the stories of LGBTQ people in Newark. + https.” Yates shared articles on Black transgender women
as well as offered commentary on the many forms of state-sanctioned violence against Black transgender women and the role of cisgender men and women play in their demise and support. She also promoted social actions for #SayHerName and #TransliberationTuesday.

Other notable voices in the discussion included Leslie Mac (@LeslieMac), founder of the Fergusson Response Network and organizer in the Black Lives Matter Network. Mac was an active participant in the #TransLiberationTuesday conversation, providing recommendations for how organizations can be more safe and inclusive for Black transgender women. Racquell Willis (@raquellwillis), a digital publisher, writer, journalist and activist based in Oakland, CA, represented 2.5% of the tweets discussing Black transgender women. She spoke about transphobia and the importance of elevating the stories and histories of Black transgender women. Similarly, Ahya Simone (@Idee_Fix), a Black transwoman in Detroit and founder of Trans Sistas of Color Project, an organization dedicated to impacting and empowering the lives of Trans women of color in Detroit, also provided recommendations for how to support Black transgender women and state-sanctioned violence against them. She was represented in more than 2% of the tweets from the account.

Together, Black Youth Project 100 (@BYP_100) and Youth Justice Coalition (@youthjusticela), an organization aimed at reforming the nation’s juvenile and criminal injustice systems, shared many ways communities can be more supportive of Black transgender women and were referenced in approximately 4.5% of tweets. Outside of these organizations, transwoman of color and activist, Janet Mock (@janetmock) and the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (@NAACP) helped draw
attention to #SayHerName activities while advocating for transgender and cisgender Black women. Black Immigration Network (@Blackimmnetwork), a member based network building the social and economic well-being of United States born Blacks and Black immigrants, also was retweeted to draw attention to various forms of law enforcement violence against Black transgender women.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Black Lives Matter’s online and offline organizing reveal a robust, creative, and collaborative model of activism that draws attention to the many ways state-sanctioned violence is impacting Black women. Half of the tweets during the Black Spring period focused on state-sanctioned violence against Black cisgender and transgender women. Tweets also highlighted 29 Black women as victims of state-sanctioned violence, and more than 30 percent of tweets covered social actions advanced by organizers working to challenge the state-sanctioned violence Black women face. The tweets during this period function rhetorically to illumine a larger narrative that involves three elements. The first is deepening followers understanding of the injustices and experiences black women face as a result of white heteropatriarchy. The second is elevating Black women as victims of state-sanctioned violence as and as leaders to combat mainstream media’s erasure and limited coverage. And lastly, advocating for legislative change via social actions that challenge the state-sanctioned violence inflicted upon Black women.

Twitter chats and social actions organized through hashtags such as #BlackNarrativesMatter, #TransLiberationTuesday, #SayHerName most often provided the space for these themes to emerge. The chats facilitated dialogue about the ways Black women experience violence and sourced recommendations from Black women and allies to hear how they might help stop these unjust acts. Ultimately, the messages seek to decenter the dominant systems of White supremacy and heteropatriarchy. For instance, tweets discussed how White identity standards are imposed and institutionalized, creating conditions for assimilation and internalized oppression among Black cisgender and transgender women. These tweets emphasize how White heteropatriarchy defines
femininity as it positions White femininity as the normative identity (Deliovsky, 2008). Heteropatriarchy functions as a concept in which patriarchy and heterosexuality become the social norm and all other genders and sexualities are considered deviant (Smith, 2006). This is particularly destructive for Black women because their racialized, sexual, and gender identities pushes them completely outside of White heteropatriarchy (Deliovsky, 2008). Black Lives Matter’s challenge of White heteropatriarchy continues in discussions of why Black women’s stories are erased in media and how they should be told, what policies are passed and who they protect, and who is deemed worthy of quality healthcare, education, food, and financial investment.

In decentering White supremacy and heteropatriarchy, Black Lives Matter centers the lives of Black women who are consistently erased in the media using hashtags and through its Twitter chats. Reasons for the perpetual erasure of Black women in media can be traced to America’s past as the American Slave trade stripped them of their gender and turned them into property (Davis, 1983). Unfortunately, these same attitudes still persist in American newsrooms dominated by white cisgender men and impact Black women’s lives as stories about women and people of color are minimized (Williams, 2016). While the Black Lives Matter organization retweeted coverage of state-sanctioned violence against Black women from news outlets like Washington Post, Time Magazine, and CNN; these outlets do not consistently capture the scope of state-sanctioned violence against Black women nor do their reports mirror the frequency of Black Lives Matter organizing efforts against the violence. However, a cadre of organizer-journalists retweeted from the Black Lives Matter help report its movement aims and its targeted injustices. Deploying hashtags that raise awareness of the women’s names like
#SandraBland, #MyaHall, #KindraChapman, among countless, these organizers promoted the stories of 29 Black women who were victims of state-sanctioned violence.

Additionally, the organizer-journalists use of alternative, user-generated media in the form of personal blogs, tweeted videos, and contributions to Black media publications such as Ebony and Essence Magazines, as well as sources like Buzzfeed, the Guardian, and Mic.com transform the Black Lives Matter’s Twitter account into an agenda-setting media. This style of reporting is reminiscent of the work of Ida B. Wells-Barnett. As an anti-lynch crusader, journalists, and women’s rights activists in the early 20th century, she used her experience as a coordinator of black liberation activities to report unconscionable acts of violence against Blacks while also rallying support to fight oppressive systems (Baker, 1996). Collectively, the efforts of these journalists serve as catalysts for mobilizing action when mainstream media fails to do so.

The collaborative nature of the Twitter chats and predominance of retweeted content from Black women, social justice organizations, activists, organizer-journalists also resemble the Black oral tradition of call and response. Conversation is not a speaker talking to a passive audience but is rather a dynamic exchange where the audience, Twitter followers in this case, punctuates, responds and affirms requests for engagement and narrative construction (Pawelczyk, 2006). The communicative style reinforces the organization’s egalitarian and inclusive model of organizing that relies on a community of followers to deepen intercultural understanding across diverse identities by providing education on how state-sanctioned violence manifests in the everyday lives of Black women.
Twitter chats and other content shared from the Black Lives Matter account also used art as a social action to galvanize supporters and to lift up the lives of Black women. Communication scholar Hancox suggests art as a form of cultural production can be used as a political tool to change how people understand distributions of agency and shape global consciousness. Even when situated in hegemonic structures, it can effect material changes and help manifest new realities (Hancox, 2011). Undoubtedly, this seemed to capture the essence of Black Lives Matter’s creative organizing efforts. Art in the form of meme images, photos, music, poetry, and others circulated under hashtags like #BlackTransLivesMatter #SheMatters and #BlackWomenAreLeaders and #TBackinBlack affirmed Black women’s leadership and identity, while encouraging supporters as calls-to-action to challenge state-sanctioned violence against Black women.

In addition to elevating the stories of Black women, Black Lives Matter tweets also activated followers to drive legislative change to stop state-sanctioned violence and dismantle white heteropatriarchy against Black women. The promotion of network meetings, national conference calls, and training provided space for all with a desire to engage in racial justice to do so and join the organization’s efforts. Black Lives Matter also used their Twitter account as a means to organize offline social action against racial profiling, law enforcement violence, and institutional discrimination inflicted upon Black women. In particular, online and offline social actions challenged 2016 Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Clinton’s campaign contributions from private prison lobby groups, while others mobilized followers across the country for public demonstrations in response to the unresolved and underreported cases of state-sanctioned violence against transgender women. When it came to addressing various forms of institutional
discrimination, Black Lives Matter used their Twitter account as a forum to source community-based solutions and to petition for state changes and encourage phone calls and letter writing to government officials. The #TransLiberationTuesday, #SayHerName, and #NoNewNYPD social actions highlighted the lack of support for Black women and also the scope of Black Lives Matters engagement in the democratic process to challenge institutional and systemic discrimination. These actions are some of the greatest examples of Black Lives Matters leveraging Twitter and other digital media as mechanisms for spurring offline engagement that challenges State decisions and systems.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Black Lives Matter embraces people from across the sexual and gender identity spectrum. More importantly, the oppression that Black women experience expressed through the Black Lives Matter Twitter account regarding their social, political, and economic power reveal how vulnerable they are to state-sanctioned violence and the imperative for social action. As discussed through the Black Lives Matter account, state-sanctioned violence manifests as white supremacy and terrorism, a system that institutionalizes whiteness to oppress and exploit Blacks. State violence also includes law enforcement violence characterized by the use of racial profiling, physical and sexual assault by police, and mass incarceration to enforce racial and gendered power relations. Institutional discrimination or the unfair distribution of and restricted access to resources based on race and gender also is another form of state violence, and contributes to the proliferation of other state violence, including intraracial violence among Black people and the gender policing and erasure of cisgender and transgender Black women in policy decisions and the media.

Consequently, the systemic adversities of Black women and the work of Black Lives Matter make it imperative that citizens and communication scholars collect data and assess the depictions of the most marginalized in our society. Scholars should consider further and deeper examination of the types of violence discussed in this thesis, paying attention to how discussion occurs around them or what social actions are effective, however, that be defined, in challenging them. The visual imagery and use of art in modern day Black liberation social movements is also ripe for further exploration as well as an investigation into the impact of how social media conversations truly impact
intraracial and interracial competence of diverse identities. Each of these themes emerged through this thesis and provide the communication field with many opportunities for future study.

As scholars consider further study of contemporary social movements like Black Lives Matter, this thesis also provides direction for approaching the work. Scholars seeking to understand contemporary social movements should identify the central channel (e.g. Twitter account, Facebook page, etc.) rather than just looking at hashtags to understand movement aims and rhetorical force. As evidenced in this work, #BlackLivesMatter does not accurately represent the nature of the Black Lives Matter social movement because coordinated activities do not occur through the use of this single hashtag. Hashtags serve as tools for coordinating offline and online social actions and elevating the stories of those groups or marginal identities movements seeks to support. Hashtags vary, created and inspired from calls to action for specific moments and individuals. They affirm diverse identities and reflect direct action from its propagators and any partner organizations. Hashtags are also subject to trolls and being co-opted, which can shift their meaning and impact. As a result, the examination of central channels allows scholars the best means to understand digital activism and how hashtags function as tactics for constructing narratives that support movement aims and coordinating movement activities.

Examination of Black Lives Matter Twitter account also reveals the scope of online and offline networked relationships that define the breadth of and help advance social movement activities. Black Lives Matter uses Twitter to promote and coordinate its social actions through its chapters and work alongside organizations like Black Youth
Project 100, The BlackOUT Collective, Safety Beyond Policing, Black Narratives Matter, among many others. Additionally, individual Twitter users are elevated as welcomed voices to reinforce the aims of the movement through their personal experience and individual efforts. The collaboration and chorus of voices reveal the depth of online and offline organizing relationships required to sustain and promote their movement activities. Study of other movements in this way can provide clarity about organizations and individuals leading efforts as well as the geographic reach and micro and macro injustices a movement seeks to challenge.

Purposive sampling is also valuable tool for examining digital activism and social movements. As evidenced by this study, it works best when aligned with a specific period or calls-to-action by movement leaders. In this case, scholars can glean a clear narrative and understanding of movement aims, relationships, and activities. A limitation with this approach is that the scope of understanding is limited to this period; however, the focus helps scholars draw conclusions about a movement’s direction at a particular moment in time. These narratives can then be combined to create an even larger narrative that details a movement’s evolution over time.

In any case, examination of online and offline social movements like Black Lives Matter give us widespread access to coordinated social actions that challenge policies and help make meaning of the world. As movements continue to leverage digital tools, social media should remain the focus of deep study and exploration. Social media functions to educate communities about the realities of the lived experience of diverse identities and serves as an alternative news source when those identities and their stories are often overlooked in the mainstream media. As evidenced by this thesis, when zooming in on
Black women’s lived experience and understanding their intersecting oppressions, research can equip us with the knowledge to challenge forces that impede Black women’s, and subsequently, everyone’s equal access to resources and opportunity.
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Black Cisgender Women Reported as Victims of State-Sanctioned Violence on the Black Lives Matter Twitter Account from May 1 – August 31, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aiyana Stanley-Jones</td>
<td>Aiyana Stanley-Jones, a 7 year old black girl, was fatally shot by police as she slept on a couch in her family's Detroit home. She was the victim of police negligence. The SWAT team had been given the incorrect address to apprehend a suspect allegedly responsible for a murder two days earlier. (LeDuff, 2010)</td>
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<td>Arniesha Bowers</td>
<td>Arniesha Bowers, 16 years old and an 11th-grader at Baltimore City College, was found dead June 7 in her grandmother's home after it had been set on fire. Police said she was kidnapped and raped, then had her genitals set on fire to hide evidence of the rape after she was strangled to death. (Silverstein, 2015)</td>
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<td>Aura Rosser</td>
<td>Aura Rosser was a mentally-ill, 40 year old black woman who was shot and killed by police following a domestic abuse call in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Police said that Rosser charged at them with a knife when they entered her home. (Counts, 2014)</td>
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<td>Gabriella Navarez</td>
<td>Gabriella Navarez, 22 year old black woman, who was killed by police during a high speed chase in Sacramento, CA. Navarez’s grandmother called the police because Navarez took her car following an argument. The police state they fired shots in self-defense as Navarez tried to ram their cars; however, on lookers suggest that she lost control of the car after being shot. There are questions with the officers’ use of lethal force to subdue her. (Crenshaw, Richie, Anspach, Gilmer, Harris, 2015)</td>
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<td>Janisha Fonville</td>
<td>Janisha Fonville, a 20 year old, queer black woman, recently diagnosed with depression and mood disorders was shot and killed by police following a domestic dispute with her girlfriend. Her girlfriend called the police to take Fonville to a mental health facility after allegedly threatening to hurt herself and others with a knife. The officer fired shots only a few minutes after entering the home. (Clasen-Kelly, 2015)</td>
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<td>Joyce Curnell</td>
<td>Joyce Curnell, a 50-year-old Edisto Island woman, died of a stomach illness a day after she was jailed for an old shoplifting case in Charleston, SC. She vomited several times while in police custody but received limited medical attention given the severity of her condition. Nurses and paramedics attempted to revive her through CPR when she was found dead, but were unable to do so. (Knapp, 2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindra Chapman</td>
<td>Kindra Chapman, 18, was found unresponsive in a jail cell in Homewood, Alabama, on Tuesday, July 14. She died hours after she was arrested and charged with first-degree robbery. Her death was ruled a suicide as reports indicate she used her bed sheet to hang herself. (Whaley, 2015)</td>
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<td>Marissa Alexander</td>
<td>Marissa Alexander, a 31 year old Florida mother, was arrested and faced nearly 60 years in prison for firing a shot in the air as self-defense against a boyfriend who beat her repeatedly and threatened her life. Alexander’s case</td>
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sparked outrage because of the unequal application of the “Stand Your Ground” law for both black Americans and women. George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch coordinator, who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, a 17 year old black male youth was acquitted of the act under the same law. (Carmon, 2015)

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Miriam Carey</td>
<td>Miriam Carey, a 34-year-old black mother with her 13-month-old daughter, was gunned down by Secret Service officers and Capitol Police in several volleys of at least 26 shots, five of which struck her and killed her. She was accused of ramming a gate at the White House. There was no gate to ram. She drove through a kiosk and was ordered to stop. Instead, she attempted to make a U-turn to leave when an off-duty, non-uniformed Secret Service agent carrying a cooler tried to block her with a bicycle rack. She tried to steer around it but bumped it with her car and left, triggering a shooting spree by Secret Service agents as they tried to apprehend her. (Farah, 2015)</td>
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<td>Natasha McKenna</td>
<td>Natasha McKenna, a 37 year old black woman suffering from schizophrenia, died after a stun gun was used on her at the Fairfax County jail. She was restrained with handcuffs behind her back, leg shackles and a mask when a sheriff’s deputy shocked her four times. (Jackman, Jouvenal, 2015)</td>
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<td>Ralkina Jones</td>
<td>Ralkina Jones, a 37 year old woman, was arrested after a reported altercation with a former spouse. She was found dead two days later due to a heart condition. Police body camera footage recorded Jones saying she didn’t want to die in a jail cell about 15 hours before her body was found. The footage also shows her talking about medical problems she had, which included a heart condition, seizures and depression. (Death of Ralkina Jones, 2015)</td>
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<td>Raynetta Turner</td>
<td>Raynetta Turner, a 43 year old, mother of eight, was found unresponsive in a Mount Vernon, New York jail. Turner was awaiting to be arraigned for a shoplifting charge before she died. She was arrested Saturday afternoon after being accused of stealing from a wholesale store called Restaurant Depot. After complaining of feeling ill, she was taken to a hospital and treated for hypertension before she was released and returned to a cell Sunday night. (Whaley, 2015)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rekia Boyd</td>
<td>Rekia Boyd, a 22 year-old black woman, died when detective Dante Servin fired shots into a group of unarmed young Black people. Though he was off-duty, witnesses have testified to him announcing himself as a police officer. Boyd was an innocent bystander in Chicago’s Douglas Park around 1:00 a.m. on March 21, 2012 when Servin, responding to a disturbance call, arrived on the scene. The officer exchanged words with Antonio Cross, who was also in the park. After turning away, Servin, who was in his car, claims he saw Cross pull out a gun. It was actually his cell phone, but it was too late. (Chicago Police, 2013)</td>
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<td>Sandra Bland</td>
<td>Sandra Bland, a 28 year old black woman suffering from depression, was stopped by officer Encinia near the Prairie View A&amp;M University campus for failing to properly signal a lane change. After a heated exchange where Bland was brutalized by the officer, the trooper arrested Bland for</td>
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assaulting a public servant. Bland was found hanged in her Waller County jail cell three days later. Her death has been ruled a suicide. (Hennessy-Fiske, 2016)

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<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheneque Proctor</td>
<td>Sheneque Proctor, a 18 year old and the mother of an infant boy, died in a holding cell at Bessemer city jail. She was arrested the previous afternoon for alleged disorderly conduct and resisting arrest outside a private party she was attending with friends. (Pilkington, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanisha Anderson</td>
<td>Tanisha Anderson died following an encounter with Cleveland police. The woman’s family had reportedly called the cops for help after the 37-year-old began having a mental health episode. When the police arrived, the family is said to have agreed to let them take Anderson to a hospital to undergo a psychiatric evaluation. The coroner reports state that Anderson died as a result of being physically restrained in a prone position by Cleveland police. (Mosbergen, 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: Black Transgender Women Reported as Victims of State-Sanctioned Violence on the Black Lives Matter Twitter Account from May 1 – August 31, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amber Monroe</td>
<td>Amber Monroe, 20, was shot and killed as she exited a vehicle near the intersection of 6 Mile and Woodward in Detroit, MI, according to police. The area, known as Palmer Park, was the location of three separate alleged hate crimes against transgender women in 2014. Few other details have been uncovered about her death. (Felton, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashton Ohara</td>
<td>Ashton O’Hara, 25, was found brutally murdered in a field in Detroit on July 14, 2015. Ashton did identify as transgender, and was genderfluid. (S, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany Flemming</td>
<td>Brittany Flemming, 20, was injured when officers opened fire Monday after she and another black transgender woman, Mya Hall, allegedly crashed into a guard post at the National Security Agency. (Hermann, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha Walker</td>
<td>Elisha Walker, a 20-year-old transgender woman who had been missing for almost a year, was found in a “crude grave” in Johnston County, North Carolina. According to advocates and local media, the discovery was made more than 100 miles from Walker’s home in Salisbury, North Carolina. A Latin Kings gang member, Angel Dejesus Arias, 23, was arrested and charged with killing Walker and stealing her car. (Glenza, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyricka Morgan</td>
<td>Eyricka Morgan, 26, reportedly died at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick following an alleged attack by a man living in her boarding house. (Nichols, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Clarke</td>
<td>India Clarke, a 25-year-old transgender woman was found beaten to death outside of a Tampa Bay community center. (Stafford, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islan Nettles</td>
<td>Islan Nettles, 20, was out in New York City with friends when a group of young men approached her, learned she was a transgender woman and began taunting and maliciously beating her to death—right in front of a police precinct in Harlem. (#TEAMEBONY, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandis Capri</td>
<td>Kandis Capri, 35, was shot and killed in Phoenix, AZ and the circumstances surrounding her death and her killer are unknown. (Stafford, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mya Hall</td>
<td>Mya Hall, 27, and her friend, 20-year-old Brittany Fleming, crashed a stolen SUV into the gates of the National Security Administration and officials began shooting at their vehicle. Authorities stated that they began shooting because the pair did not initially stop proceeding toward the building when authorized to do so. Hall was killed in the incident. (Romano, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny Proud</td>
<td>Penny Proud, a 21-year-old black trans woman, was fatally shot multiple times by an unidentified assailant in New Orleans. Reports indicate that she was likely murdered in the midst of a robbery. (Kellaway, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade Schuler</td>
<td>Shade Schuler, 22, was found dead by police in a vacant field just west of in Dallas, TX. Schuler’s body was badly decomposed, according to police, and it took them nearly two weeks to identify her. (Pilkington, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelley Hilliard</td>
<td>Shelley Hilliard, 19, reported missing for several weeks in 2011 was identified by police after her burned torso found on Detroit’s east side. A cab driver who Hilliard often relied on for rides dropped her off at home on the night of October 23. Hillard’s mother says the cab driver claims there were three men waiting for Hilliard and that her daughter called the driver back and he “started to hear her say, ‘What are you doing,’ then scream out loud ‘No,’ then her phone dropped, a few muffling noises, then the phone went dead... By the time he got back around the corner, there was no one in sight.” (Michelson, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazmin Payne</td>
<td>Yasmin Payne, a 33-year-old transgender woman, was found fatally stabbed in a burning Los Angeles, CA apartment. The next day, Ezekiel Jamal Dear, a 25-year-old black man, turned himself in to police at a South Los Angeles police station. He was accompanied by a pastor. (Yasmin Vash Payne, 33 - The Homicide Report, 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CURRICULUM VITAE

Jonathan Matthew Williams
williamj@wfu.edu

Education
Wake Forest University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, Winston-Salem, NC, December 2016
Masters of Arts in Communication, GPA: 4.0
Master’s Thesis: Spring into Action for Black Women: Examining the Black Lives Matter Organization’s Twitter Coverage of State-Sanctioned Violence against Black Women

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, May 2009
Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication; minor in Entrepreneurship and the Social Enterprise

Casa Artom, Venice, Italy, Jan. – May 2008
Semester abroad studying Italian fashion and global social problems

Professional Experience
• Wake Forest University, Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)  
  Director of Communication  
  Winston-Salem, NC, January 2016 – Present

• Wake Forest University, Office of Personal and Career Development (OPCD)  
  Associate Director of Marketing and Communication  
  Winston-Salem, NC, September 2013 – November 2015

• Wake Forest University, Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)  
  Assistant Director  
  Winston-Salem, NC, September 2011 – September 2013

• Ketchum Public Relations  
  Assistant Account Executive  
  Atlanta, GA, May 2009 – August 2011

• Widmeyer Communication  
  Education Fellow  
  Washington D.C., September 2009 – December 2009

Wake Forest University Service
• Committee Member, Campus Climate Implementation Team (2016)  
  Appointed by the Provost to help advance action items that strengthen the campus commitment to inclusion

• Vice Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Partners Council (2016)  
  Appointed by the Chief Diversity Office to lead group of stakeholders from units across campus charged with communicating and advancing diversity and inclusion initiatives

• Campaign Host, Wake Forest 1 Billion Dollar Capital Campaign (2015)  
  Moderated fundraising discussions with senior leadership in front of high net worth donors across the country

• Member, Executive Committee for Collaborative Campus Climate Working Group (2014-2015)
Appointed by Chief Diversity Officer to develop communication strategy to improve campus climate

- Co-Chair, Faces of Courage: 50th Anniversary of Integration Committee (2012 – 2013)
  Institutional committee to commemorate University’s 50th Anniversary of Integration

- Diversity Educator, Wake Forest University Diversity Education Program (2011 – Present)
  Certified by Executive Diversity Services, Inc. to strengthen the intercultural skills and understanding of the LGBTQ community for students, faculty, and staff

Professional and Scholarly Conference Presentations
- “It’s About Time to Spring Into Action for Black Women”
  Invited Speaker, TEDxWinstonSalemWomen, Winston-Salem, NC (2016)

- “Activism in the field” Forum

- #BlackPoliticsMatter: Movement for Black lives & Further Application of Tech Innovation to Civic Engagement
  Panelist, Personal Democracy Forum, New York City, NY (2016)

- Examining Coverage of State Sanctioned Violence Against Black Women on the Black Lives Matter Twitter Account
  Panelist, Rhetoric Society of America, Atlanta, GA (2016)

- Spring Into Action for Black Women: Examining the Rhetorical Force of Black Lives Matter Movement
  Panelist, Digital Blackness Conference, Rutgers University (2016)

Industry Conference Presentations
- Growing Your First Destination Knowledge Rate
  Presenter, Eastern Association of Colleges & Employers, Pittsburgh, PA (2015)

- Marketing Made Easy: Tactics to Attract Students to Career Programs

- Achieving a High Response Rate to First Destination Survey

Awards & Honors
- Top 40 Under 40 Leadership Award, Chamber of Commerce, Winston-Salem, NC (2016)
- Martin Luther King Jr. Building the Dream Staff Award, Wake Forest University & Winston-Salem State University, Winston-Salem, NC (2014)
- River Run International Film Festival: Impetus to Desegregate accepted and screened, Winston-Salem, NC (2013)
- Reynolda Film Festival: Impetus to Desegregate accepted and screened, Winston-Salem, NC (2013)
- National Public Radio’s Directors Award for 50th Anniversary of Integration Oral History Project (2013)
- National Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award, Insight into Diversity Magazine (2012)
- Brooklyn Bridge Award, Gamma Delta Chapter, Alpha Kappa Psi (2012)
- Alma Mater Award, Gamma Delta Chapter, Alpha Kappa Psi (2012)
- Texas Public Relations Association; Silver Spur: Community Relations, Cause Related Marketing Category (2010)
- Ketchum Public Relations KMOTION Award: agency award recognizing employee performance (2010)
- Lambda Pi Eta, National Communication Honor Society (2009)

**Professional Development**
- BB&T Leadership Institute, Raleigh, NC (2016)
- Institute for Intercultural Communication (Winter 2014 & Summer 2013)
- United Way Project Blueprint Program for Non-Profit Board Leadership Development (2012)
- Diversity Trainer Certification from Executive Diversity Services and WFU Safe Zone Training (2012)
- Southern Regional Education Board’s Annual Institute on Teaching & Mentoring, Atlanta, GA (2011)

**Community Service**
- Elder, Grace Presbyterian Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC (2014 – 2016)
- Public Relations Executive in Residence, Office of Personal & Career Development, Wake Forest University (2012)
- Young Leaders United, United Way of Forsyth County, Winston-Salem, NC (2012)
- Atlanta’s Emerging 100, Auxiliary of 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc., Atlanta, GA (2011-2012)

**Computer Skills**
- Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Office, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Radian 6, Hootsuite, CisionPoint, Nvivo