

“THE DAY BEYONCÉ TURNED BLACK”: AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA  
RESPONSES TO BEYONCÉ’S SUPER BOWL 50 HALFTIME PERFORMANCE

BY

KRISTINA KOKKONOS

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Communication

December, 2017

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Approved By:

Alessandra Von Burg, Ph. D., Advisor

Mary M. Dalton, Ph.D., Chair

Mollie Rose Canzona, Ph.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge my incredible committee members for their guidance on this project. I would like to thank my third reader, Dr. Mary Dalton, who not only agreed to be on my committee while she was on leave but provided a crucial perspective on journalistic credibility that greatly influenced the way I approached my analysis. I am grateful for her copy-editing knowledge, her positive attitude and gracious acceptance of my disdain for the Oxford comma.

I would like to thank my second reader, Dr. Mollie Canzona, for guiding me through a qualitative process that was entirely new to me but became the best method for completing my analysis. She was always available when I had questions, provided essential ideas and critiques and showed compassion in some of my more anxiety-ridden moments. Taking her class in tandem with writing this thesis was both extremely helpful and a memorable learning experience for me.

And I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Alessandra Von Burg, for not only introducing me to this program but for being imperative to my success within it. She has helped to shape so many of my ideas for this project, from its early days in her Rhetorical Theory class up until the final stages of this thesis, and has continuously encouraged me to be brave about using my own voice. Her attention to detail is unrivaled and her commitment to this project was more than I could have ever hoped for from an advisor. This thesis could not, and would not, have happened without her and the rest of my committee. From the bottom of my heart: Thank you Mary, Mollie and Alessandra.

I have to thank my parents for being subjected to my stress levels that I at times could not hide but for never faltering in their faith in and support of me. I love them very much.

I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of the Wake Forest Department of Communication for their support throughout my graduate career and opening possibilities that I had not anticipated. A special thanks goes to Candice Burris for her encouragement and hugs.

Finally, I would like to thank Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter for providing me with a lifetime of inspiration and a performance that produced the 86 pages to award me a Master's degree. If she ever learns about this thesis, I hope she knows that I worked hard and grinded 'til I owned it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	List of Tables.....	iv
II.	Abstract.....	v
III.	Chapter One Introduction.....	1
IV.	Chapter Two The Message, the Messenger and the Setting: Results of the Thematic Analysis.....	17
V.	Chapter Three Unstated Assumptions: An Enthymematic Analysis of Themes within the Conservative Media’s Response.....	40
VI.	Chapter Four Conclusion.....	58
VII.	References.....	67
VIII.	Appendix A.....	77
IX.	Appendix B.....	79
X.	Curriculum Vitae.....	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Themes and Dimensions.....39

## ABSTRACT

This thesis involves an analysis of media responses to Beyoncé's Super Bowl 50 halftime performance of the song "Formation." The first method is a qualitative thematic analysis that aims to answer two research questions: 1) What themes are presented within liberal and conservative media responses? 2) How are these themes and their dimensions framed within each type of response? I predicted that liberal sources favored the performance while conservative sources rejected it because of oppositional interpretations of two key elements: Beyoncé's support of Black liberation movements and her insertion of political speech into American football. The second method is a rhetorical analysis via the concept of the rhetorical enthymeme. I argue that the conservative framings of themes within the media's response utilize unstated assumptions that are rooted in the ideological principles of conservatism. These include a respect for law enforcement, an embodiment of patriotism and, ultimately, a connection to whiteness and racism. Because the conservative media author or speaker has an audience of media consumers who share a conservative worldview, he or she presents arguments (including the condemnation of Beyoncé's performance) based on these unstated assumptions.

## | CHAPTER ONE |

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, the National Football League's Super Bowl continues to be the most-watched televised event in the United States. In 2016, the event's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary drew the third-largest viewing audience in the nation's television history; the peak amount of viewers, at 115.5 million, occurred during the halftime performance from Coldplay, Bruno Mars and Beyoncé.<sup>1</sup> Though Beyoncé's set in particular only took up about a minute and a half of the 13-minute show, it quickly became the set that sparked the most conversation.

She performed her brand new single, "Formation," while surrounded by 30 dancers sporting black leather, afros and berets, all reminiscent of the clothing female members of the Black Panther Party once wore. The troupe also payed homage to Civil Rights leader Malcom X by getting into an "X" formation on the field.<sup>2</sup> After the performance, her dancers posed for a picture with a sign that read "Justice 4 Mario Woods" – a 26-year-old Black man who was killed in December of the previous year by San Francisco police.<sup>3</sup> The song and corresponding music video that had been released just the day before were widely recognized as "among the most politically direct work[s]

---

<sup>1</sup> Frank Pallotta and Brian Stelter, "Super Bowl 50 Audience is Third Largest in TV History," *CNN*, February 8, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/02/08/media/super-bowl-50-ratings/>.

<sup>2</sup> Deena Zaru, "Beyonce Gets Political at Super Bowl, Pays Tribute to 'Black Lives Matter,'" *CNN*, February 9, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/08/politics/beyonce-super-bowl-black-lives-matter/>.

<sup>3</sup> Jamilah King, "Mario Woods, Slain Man Beyoncé's Dancers Honored at Super Bowl, Had 21 Gunshot Wounds," *Mic*, February 12, 2016, <https://mic.com/articles/135167/mario-woods-slain-man-beyonc-s-dancers-honored-at-super-bowl-had-21-gunshot-wounds#.j1g7S9m6i>.

she's done in her career, with implicit commentary on police brutality, Hurricane Katrina and black financial power.”<sup>4</sup>

Both the video and subsequent halftime performance received an extraordinary amount of media attention. Though media responses to Super Bowl halftime shows are not new, the responses to Beyoncé's Super Bowl set was unique because they were overtly political in nature. Media sources seemed to react to the performance either with praise for Beyoncé's decision to make a statement during the show or with contempt for injecting politics into the Super Bowl. Upon reviewing both liberal and conservative media responses – a distinction determined mainly by the audience's partisanship via Pew Research Center's Ideological Placement Scale<sup>5</sup> and AllSides.com<sup>6</sup> – as a background study for this thesis, common themes and patterns emerged in the response to Beyoncé's performance. Liberal sources seemed to frame the performance positively or supportively; for example, *The Washington Post's* response was titled “The night Beyoncé won the Super Bowl” and asked, “Has anyone approached the gig as seriously and skillfully as Beyoncé did on Sunday night?”<sup>7</sup> Conversely, conservative sources seemed to be consistently less supportive; *Frontpage Magazine's* response titled “Super Bowl Halftime Anti-Police Rally” opens with the statement, “Beyoncé's glorification of

---

<sup>4</sup> Jon Caramanica, Wesley Morris and Jenna Wortham, “Beyoncé in ‘Formation’: Entertainer, Activist, Both?” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/arts/music/beyonce-formation-super-bowl-video.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/arts/music/beyonce-formation-super-bowl-video.html?_r=0).

<sup>5</sup> Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Jocelyn Kiley and Katerina Matsa, “Political Polarization & Media Habits,” *Pew Research Center*, October 21, 2014, <http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>.

<sup>6</sup> “AllSides Bias Ratings,” *AllSides*, 2017, <https://www.allsides.com/bias/bias-ratings>.

<sup>7</sup> Chris Richards, “The Night Beyoncé Won the Super Bowl,” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/02/07/the-night-beyonce-won-the-super-bowl/?utm\\_term=.4469f5b04f4c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/02/07/the-night-beyonce-won-the-super-bowl/?utm_term=.4469f5b04f4c).

the Black Panther Party during the Pepsi Super Bowl halftime show is the latest example of the war on police.”<sup>8</sup>

In order to discover if this general pattern among liberal and conservative media reactions is in fact consistent, and to discover which themes are prevalent within each type of response, this thesis first involves a thematic analysis of a selected group of responses to Beyoncé’s Super Bowl performance. My research questions for the analysis are: 1) What themes are presented within liberal and conservative media responses? And 2) How are these themes and their dimensions framed within each type of response? I predict that liberal sources favored the performance while conservative sources rejected it because of oppositional interpretations of two key elements: Beyoncé’s support of Black liberation movements and her insertion of political speech into American football. Within conservative media responses, I argue that the negative framings of those themes involve unstated assumptions that are rooted in the ideological principles of conservatism, including a respect for law enforcement, an embodiment of patriotism and, ultimately, a connection to whiteness and racism. These hidden assumptions function rhetorically as enthymemes, in which the speaker – be it the conservative author of a written response or host of a televised response – “does not lay down [their] premises but lets [their] audience supply them out of its stock of opinion and knowledge”<sup>9</sup> Because the speaker’s audience of media consumers shares a conservative worldview, and thus the same stock

---

<sup>8</sup> Dawn Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime Anti-Police Rally,” *Frontpage Magazine*, February 9, 2016, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/261770/super-bowl-halftime-anti-police-rally-dawn-perlmutter>.

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd F. Bitzer, “Aristotle’s Enthymeme Revisited,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 45, no. 4 (1959): 407.

of opinion and knowledge, conservative media responses build on these unstated assumptions in the condemnation of Beyoncé's performance.

“The Day Beyoncé Turned Black” borrows from the title of a *Saturday Night Live* skit that dramatically details the day “Formation” was released and the negative reactions to it, describing it as “the day that shook the whole white world” and “the day that white people lost ‘their’ Beyoncé.”<sup>10</sup> Though a satirical interpretation, the skit does reflect how the song and performance became a topic of heavy discussion and analysis because it marked a pivotal moment in Beyoncé's mostly controversy-free career. It was probably the most divisive moment in her career because, up until “Formation,” both her ethnic ambiguity and perceived silence on social and political issues had allowed her to become accepted as a universally consumable celebrity figure. Furthermore, her decision to make her supposed political debut – one that confronts racism head on – in one of the most allegedly post-racial arenas in the country was bound to stir controversy. From Tommie Smith and John Carlos's black power salute at the 1968 Olympics to Colin Kaepernick's kneeling protest of police brutality during the national anthem, the injection of racial politics into sports arenas has always been difficult for white conservatives to accept.<sup>11</sup> My goals for this thesis are to explore which arguments, both overt and unstated, are deployed within a divided media in ways that reflect divided ideologies. Art is meant to be misunderstood, but this was a performance that simultaneously persuaded an entire sheriffs' association to boycott providing security at her tour and drove ticket

---

<sup>10</sup> “The Day Beyoncé Turned Black,” *Saturday Night Live*, February 14, 2016, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ociMBfkDG1w>.

<sup>11</sup> Domenico Montanaro, “Trump, The NFL and The Powder Keg History of Race, Sports and Politics,” *NPR*, September 25, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2017/09/25/553478047/trump-the-nfl-and-the-powder-keg-history-of-race-sports-and-politics>.

buyers to make it one of the highest grossing tours of the year. An in-depth examination of the media's divided response to "Formation" will provide insightful contributions to the conversations about the state of the media, the role of celebrity activism and the politics of American sports in 2017.

The following literature review explores the relationships between political ideologies and the media, conservatism and Black liberation, and the NFL and colorblind patriotism. The method section details the media response selection process, including how to define liberal and conservative sources, and the process for my thematic analysis.

### **Literature Review**

#### Liberalism, Conservatism and the Media

Fred Kerlinger asserts that studies of the political ideologies of Americans has shown profound distinctions in the social attitudes of those who consider themselves "liberal" or "conservative." Some of the ideologies liberalism is associated with include "tolerance, the rights of minorities, social progress and change, and positive government action to improve the social order and human welfare"<sup>12</sup> while typical ideologies of conservatism include "[an] emphasis on the status quo and social stability...the natural inequality of men [and] the uncertainty of progress."<sup>13</sup> If these political identifications are based on social attitudes or "general cognitive processes intimately tied to [one's] social [life],"<sup>14</sup> they must influence the choices one makes every day. This includes the choice

---

<sup>12</sup> Fred N. Kerlinger, "Liberalism and Conservatism," *Liberalism and Conservatism: The Nature and Structure of Social Attitudes* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1984), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Kerlinger; "Liberalism and Conservatism," 17.

<sup>14</sup> Kerlinger; "Liberalism and Conservatism," 11.

of how to present mediated information, as well as the types of media one chooses to consume.

Agenda setting theory states that the media place certain topics on the forefront of its coverage to guide the public in what it should be thinking about; media framing theory tells the public *how* to think about these topics,<sup>15</sup> which varies greatly based on a source's political leaning. Jim Kuypers argues that "the media have evolved into a partisan collective which both consciously and unconsciously attempt to persuade the public to accept its interpretation of the world as true."<sup>16</sup> Pairing this idea with recent conversations about media echo chambers, or the "combination of algorithms and personal choices [that] allow us to focus on content that confirms our beliefs,"<sup>17</sup> suggests that audiences choose media that they perceive to correspond to their political ideology. Therefore, for the purpose of this thematic analysis, a source's liberalness or conservativeness is determined by the political affiliation of the majority of its audience – a process to be detailed in the method section below.

An echo chamber offers a symbiotic relationship between an audience and the media it chooses to consume; the ideologies associated with each political affiliation, then, must also be reflected within the audience's chosen media. Conservatism's concern with maintaining the status quo is particularly relevant when it is confronted with

---

<sup>15</sup> James W. Tankard, "Chapter 4: The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing," *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy and August Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2001), 95.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Kuypers, "Understanding Media Manipulation of Controversial Issues," *Press Bias and Politics: How The Media Frame Controversial Issues* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 12.

<sup>17</sup> Emily Parker, "In Praise of Echo Chambers," *The Washington Post*, May 22, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/05/22/in-praise-of-echo-chambers/?utm\\_term=.2e3153e47a79](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/05/22/in-praise-of-echo-chambers/?utm_term=.2e3153e47a79).

progressive ideas or movements, like the Black Panthers and Black Lives Matter. Its respect for law and order as a means to maintain the status quo is directly related to its historical rejection of Black liberation movements, which is key to understanding the arguments deployed in the conservative media's condemnation of "Formation" at the Super Bowl.

### Conservatism, Law and Order and Black Liberation

One of the central goals of Black liberation movements like the Black Panthers and Black Lives Matter is to end unjust and disproportionate police violence against Black Americans, a notion that is often misconstrued by the conservative media to mean that the groups simply exist to intimidate or terrorize law enforcement. Kerlinger asserts that an "obedience to and respect for authority" is a core virtue of conservatism;<sup>18</sup> therefore, a critique of law enforcement can be seen as radical behavior. This sentiment is replicated in many conservative responses to the "Formation," such as Rudy Giuliani's claim on *Fox & Friends* that Beyoncé used the Super Bowl "as a platform to attack police officers, who are the people who protect her and protect us and keep us alive."<sup>19</sup> The dangerous, anti-police reputation of the Black Panthers was perpetuated by all types of media, regardless of political leaning, when the group gained momentum in the late sixties:

We can think of no organization that was or is more maligned, misrepresented or misconstrued than the BPP. The party suffers from a distorted and warped image that was largely framed by both the print (including the Panthers' own newspaper) and television media...

---

<sup>18</sup> Kerlinger; "Liberalism and Conservatism," 17.

<sup>19</sup> "Fox & Friends Attacks Beyoncé's Super Bowl Performance," *Raw Story*, February 8, 2016, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqnvcVsWamI>.

Consequently, for some, the Panthers are known more for their histrionics and showdowns with police than their community survival programs.<sup>20</sup>

This reputation is reiterated within many conservative responses to the “Formation” performance, such as *Frontpage Magazine*’s categorization of the BPP as a “violent anti-police organization” that “protested against police brutality and used violence to achieve their revolutionary goal of igniting a race war in the United States.”<sup>21</sup> Liberal responses, on the other hand, tend to frame the Party more optimistically: *The Guardian*, for example, refers to them as “a revolutionary black nationalist [organization] and one of the most influential civil rights groups of the late 60s.”<sup>22</sup> The difference between liberal and conservative media interpretations of the goals of Black liberation movements – as a well as a difference in existing ideological principles, like conservatism’s utmost respect for police – allows for oppositional framings of the Black Panthers and Black Lives Matter in the context of “Formation.”

Along with offering a perceived threat to law and order, Black liberation movements seek to overthrow the traditional social order that conservatism strives to maintain. The United States’ history of systemic racism has put institutions in place that uphold the unjust advancement of whites and enforce anti-Black practices; therefore, they are inevitably imbedded within conservatism’s status quo where “Liberty is insisted upon” but equality “does not exist, nor can it exist.”<sup>23</sup> Conservatism’s rejection of Black

---

<sup>20</sup> Judson L. Jeffries and Ryan Nissim-Sabat, “Introduction,” *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities Across America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), ix-x.

<sup>21</sup> Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime.”

<sup>22</sup> Jessica Elgot, “Beyoncé Unleashes Black Panthers Homage at Super Bowl 50,” *The Guardian*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/08/beyonce-black-panthers-homage-black-lives-matter-super-bowl-50>.

<sup>23</sup> Kerlinger; “Liberalism and Conservatism,” 17.

liberation movements, then, involves unstated premises rooted in the preservation of systemic racism that are reproduced within conservative media responses to messages of Black liberation, such as “Formation.”

Along with “lov[ing] order and respect[ing] authority,”<sup>24</sup> conservatism is similarly correlated with patriotism; Bruce Frohnen writes, “Conservatism being concerned greatly with love of the familiar, it contains within itself a disposition toward love of one’s own, and not least of one’s country.”<sup>25</sup> American football is explicitly patriotic also, but its exclusion of race develops a hegemonic American identity that limits which identities are deemed acceptable. Beyoncé in “Formation,” categorized as un-American, represents an unacceptable form of American identity for many conservative media authors and speakers.

#### American Football and Colorblind Patriotism

The Super Bowl, and American football in general, is uniquely and explicitly patriotic, thus stimulating a correlation between football fandom and national identification. Sorek and White provide an in-depth overview of the NFL’s relationship to patriotism and national identity and how those relationships and identities are complicated by race. The “hegemonic narrative of American national identity” the authors describe is a color-blind one; because white viewers continuously accept the presence of Black athletes on the field, but are less aware of the lack of Black representation among CEOs, Presidents and team owners, they may believe that the sport is post-racial and may disinvite racial criticism. Utilizing a negative correlation between

---

<sup>24</sup> Kerlinger, “Liberalism and Conservatism,” 241.

<sup>25</sup> Bruce P. Frohnen, “The Patriotism of a Conservative,” *Modern Age* 48, no. 2 (2006): 106.

Black identification and perceived American nationalism, the authors “postulate that a sense of black collective pride experienced in the sphere of American football might be translated into aversion to American national pride.”<sup>26</sup>

Five months after the performance, Giuliani called the Black Lives Matter movement “anti-American” and “inherently racist”;<sup>27</sup> conservative radio host Sandy Rios claimed that Beyoncé is an “anti-white racist” and that her performance “honored murder and anti-American terrorism.”<sup>28</sup> Be it Beyoncé’s endorsements of Black liberation movements, her celebration of her Blackness or a combination of both, “Formation” was translated into an aversion of American national pride by some conservative media authors and speakers. To them, her performance represented a threat to the patriotic social order typically seen at the Super Bowl. My thematic analysis will determine how consistently the un-American theme is used in the conservative media’s response to “Formation” while my rhetorical analysis examines conservatism’s role in preserving this hegemonic idea of Americanism. The following method section details the response selection process, how liberal and conservative sources are defined for the analysis and the process of carrying out my thematic analysis.

---

<sup>26</sup> Tamir Sorek and Robert G. White, “American Football and National Pride: Racial Differences,” *Social Science Research* 58 (July 2016): 266-278, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/go.libproxy.wakehealth.edu/science/article/pii/S0049089X15300764>.

<sup>27</sup> Melissa Chan, “Rudy Giuliani says ‘Black Lives Matter’ is ‘Inherently Racist,’” *Time*, July 10, 2016, <http://time.com/4400259/rudy-giuliani-black-lives-matter/>.

<sup>28</sup> Brian Tashman, “Sandy Rios: Beyonce Ushering in The Antichrist with Her ‘Black Racism’ and ‘Lawlessness,’” *Right Wing Watch*, February 9, 2016, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/sandy-rios-beyonce-ushering-in-the-antichrist-with-her-black-racism-and-lawlessness/>.

## Method

### Response Selection

I used Google News to find media responses of Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance because it provided the widest range of media sources, including those not considered to be traditional "news." An initial search of "Beyoncé Super Bowl" yielded about 14,400 results between February 7, 2017 and February 29, 2017. Searching "Beyoncé halftime" yielded about 5,590 results for the same dates. The date range began on February 7 to provide responses that focus on the Super Bowl halftime show and not strictly the release of the "Formation" music video, which was released on February 6 and likely mentioned Beyoncé's upcoming performance for the next night. However, the typical response or review of the halftime show contained significant discussions about the video itself; therefore, responses to the halftime show and responses to the music video are impossible to separate, so the framing of the video in context with the performance is part of the analysis.

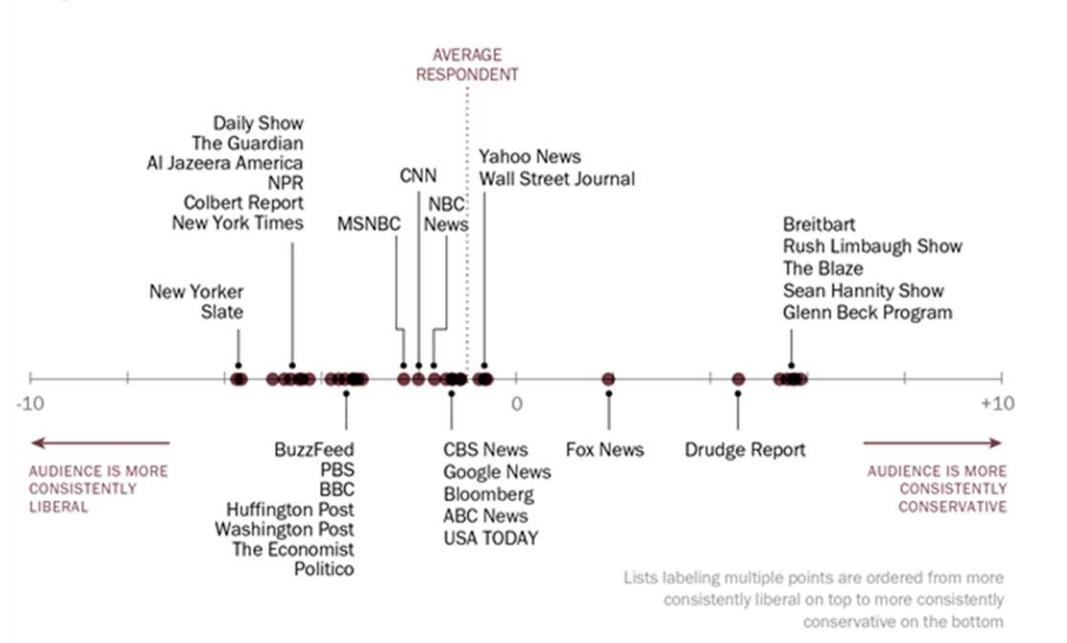
Defining liberal and conservative responses for the analysis relied heavily on the identified affiliation of a source's audience. The Pew Research Center's study<sup>29</sup> helped to determine which sources a politically-identified individual reads most often and trusts the most. Pew found that almost half of conservatives consistently list *Fox News* as their top media source, while liberals are split between *CNN*, *NPR*, *MSNBC* and *The New York Times*. The compiled results produced this scale, based on the ideological placement of each source's average reader:

---

<sup>29</sup> Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley, and Matsa, "Political Polarization."

### Ideological Placement of Each Source's Audience

Average ideological placement on a 10-point scale of ideological consistency of those who got news from each source in the past week...



I first randomly selected responses from the sources on this scale that were specifically about the performance or the reactions to it; all headlines/titles chosen contained the key words “Beyoncé,” “Super Bowl,” “halftime,” “show” or “performance.” I then determined each response’s liberal or conservative categorization from this scale. Responses that met these criteria accounted for all 10 liberal sources (*CNN*, *CBS News*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera America*, *MSNBC*, *BBC News*, *The Huffington Post*, and *The Washington Post*), but only three conservative sources (*Fox News*, *Breitbart News* and *The Blaze*). This imbalance is due to the overall disparity of liberal and conservative sources listed on Pew’s scale – while there are a total of 25 liberal-leaning sources, there are only seven conservative-leaning sources.

The next step was to search for responses – again, via Google News and within the established date range – containing key words in the headlines from sources listed on *The New Revere*’s “Top 100 Conservative Websites, February 2016 Edition.” The list is

based on “Alexa rankings for roughly 200 conservative websites” in the U.S.<sup>30</sup> I then randomly selected responses about Beyoncé’s performance from seven of those sources (*The Daily Mail*, *Townhall*, *Western Journalism*, *The New York Post*, *The Conservative Tribune*, *The Daily Caller*, and *Frontpage Magazine*). Because this list provided a narrowed-down pool of sources to choose from but no method for determining each source’s conservativeness, I searched each one on AllSides. The website determines the partisan biases of media sources using methods such as blind surveys, third party data, community feedback, editorial reviews and independent research.<sup>31</sup> These seven remaining sources were labeled as having a politically “right” bias on AllSides. Using Pew’s scale, *The New Revere*’s website and AllSides in choosing the 20 responses for the thematic analysis ensured that each could be clearly categorized as liberal or conservative.

I have deliberately chosen to use the words “responses” or “reactions” as opposed to “articles” or “coverage” for several reasons. The significantly smaller amount of credible conservative sources made it difficult to find traditional news coverage of Beyoncé’s performance; additionally, I wanted to include popular conservative responses, like those from Rudy Giuliani and Tomi Lahren, that would not fit into the definition of an “article.” Instead, I chose 10 conservative responses in both text and video form, as well as a mixture of source-identified “news” or “opinion” reactions to the performance for the entire sample. My analysis revealed that all 20 sources contained

---

<sup>30</sup> Justin Haskins, “Top 100 Conservative Websites, February 2016 Edition,” *The New Revere*, February 24, 2016, <http://thenewrevere.com/2016/02/the-top-100-conservative-websites-february-2016-edition/>.

<sup>31</sup> “Media bias rating methods,” *AllSides*, 2017, <https://www.allsides.com/bias/media-bias-rating-methods>.

opinionated sentiments, regardless of a “news” or “opinion” category, which upholds framing theory’s assertion that all media implicitly or explicitly favors a particular side of an issue. This distinction supports my decision to defer from traditional news coverage of the performance. In the results section, I do identify which responses are designated as “opinion” to distinguish the origin of more explicitly opinionated sentiments better. In addition to wanting to encompass non-traditional sources, I also use the word “response” instead of “article” to avoid setting up false equivalencies for particular sources; though *Breitbart News*, for example, happens to be one of the President’s favorite “news” sources,<sup>32</sup> its “news” reporting is not considered to be of the same journalistic standard as, say, *The Washington Post*.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the thematic analysis aims to specifically discover which themes are prevalent in popular liberal and conservative media responses, not strictly in news coverage.

#### Analytical Process

I conducted a thematic analysis of media responses to the halftime show using the theory of media framing.<sup>34</sup> A thematic analysis is qualitative research method that is used “for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.” Because it is “not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework,”<sup>35</sup> it can be used within a variety of frameworks, including media framing. The reflexive process of conducting a thematic

---

<sup>32</sup> “How Breitbart Became Donald Trump’s Favourite News Site,” *BBC News*, November 14, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37109970>.

<sup>33</sup> Billy Binion, “Breitbart: Right-Wing Publication or Fake News?” *AllSides*, July 28, 2017, <https://www.allsides.com/blog/breitbart-right-wing-publication-or-fake-news>.

<sup>34</sup> Tankard, *Framing Public Life*, 95.

<sup>35</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 6-9.

analysis involves cross-referencing the data and its identified themes, constantly looking for ways to collapse or expand said themes. A theme occurs when it is both recurrent and repetitive, wherein both salient meanings and repetitions of key words and phrases are present in between 25 and 50 percent of cases. A third criterion occasionally used in thematic analysis is defined as forcefulness “which refers to vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses which serve to stress and subordinate some utterances from other locations in the oral reports;”<sup>36</sup> because my sample only contained two oral reports (from *Fox & Friends* and *The Blaze*), forcefulness was not considered in determining a theme. For my analysis, I first created separate Word documents for each initial theme I identified. I then copied sentences or paragraphs from the responses that highlighted a theme(s) into its corresponding document, labeled with its source and partisanship. I identified in each document the different dimensions within each theme (i.e. when mentioning Black Lives Matter, does a response discuss an incident of police brutality associated with the movement empathetically or does it try to discredit the victim and/or the movement?). After identifying these themes, I collapsed or expanded the themes and their dimensions depending on their similarity or divergence from other themes. Eventually, I organized everything into three main themes that reflected the message, messenger and setting in which “Formation” was presented, while the dimensions of each theme reflected either a conservative or liberal framing. I placed each theme and its dimensions into a liberal or conservative codebook with exemplary quotes, which I used to write the results section of my analysis in the next chapter.

---

<sup>36</sup> William Foster Owen, “Interpretive Themes in Relational Communication,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70, no. 3 (1984): 275.

Verification strategies for this analysis include a prolonged time with this material, having an external auditor and listing negative cases. I have read media responses to this topic from a wide variety sources and have incorporated my analysis and interpretation of them into several projects, including a quantitative content analysis. The analysis provided insight into which themes might emerge from my thematic analysis. The prolonged time and experience with this material has allowed me to determine saturation, a term in qualitative research defined as “the point at which no new insights are obtained, no new themes are identified, and no issues arise regarding a category of data.”<sup>37</sup> Dr. Mollie Canzona, the second reader for my thesis, has served as an external auditor by having been involved in every step of the thematic analysis. Finally, my thematic analysis includes several negative cases, which offer exceptions to my general organization of themes and dimensions – ultimately, these cases serve to show that I am not reporting only the results that support my predictions. All three of these verification techniques function to protect validity and reliability of this research, respectively defined as the “‘appropriateness’ of the tools, processes, and data” and the consistency in yielding “data that are ontologically similar.”<sup>38</sup> The following chapters detail the results of this thematic analysis and a rhetorical analysis of the themes within conservative responses, as well as a comparative case study within the conclusion.

---

<sup>37</sup> Glenn A. Bowen, “Naturalistic Inquiry and the Saturation Concept: A Research Note,” *Qualitative Research* 8, no. 1 (February 2008): 140.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence Leung, “Validity, Reliability and Generalizability in Qualitative Research,” *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 4, no. 3 (2015): 324-327.

## | CHAPTER TWO |

### THE MESSAGE, THE MESSENGER AND THE SETTING: RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This thematic analysis aims to answer two research questions: 1) What themes are presented within liberal and conservative media responses? And 2) How are these themes and their dimensions framed within each type of response? Three main themes emerge within both liberal and conservative media responses that pertain to the message, the messenger and the setting in which “Formation” was presented. Each theme, its dimensions and the type of source most commonly associated with them are listed in Table 1 at the end of this chapter. The themes and dimensions are detailed in the sections below, including exemplary quotes from the 20 media responses used in the analysis. Liberal sources are identified with a subscript “L” after its citation’s footnote number while conservative sources are identified with a subscript “C.”

#### **Black Liberation: A Threat to Police or an Expression of Black Pride?**

Beyoncé’s tribute to the Black Panthers (with her dancers’ outfits and raised fists) and the references to the Black Lives Matter movement in the music video and following the performance caused these two groups and their messages to be heavily discussed in mediated reactions to the halftime show; thus, her message of Black liberation is a major theme in this analysis. The Black Liberation theme among conservative responses includes the following dimensions: 1) “Black Liberation as Anti-Police” and 2) “Black Liberation as Violent or Unfounded.” Dimensions of the Black Liberation theme among liberal responses include: 1) “Black Liberation as ‘Anti-Police’” or “Black Liberation as

Anti-Police Brutality,” 2) “Black Liberation as Revolutionary or Warranted” and 3) “Black Liberation as Black Pride.”

### Black Liberation as Anti-Police

Seven of the 10 conservative reactions to “Formation” at the Super Bowl frame the performance and/or video as an attack on police, referencing a perceived anti-police nature of the Black Panthers and the Black Lives Matter. The opening sentence of *Frontpage Magazine*’s opinion piece reads, “Beyoncé’s glorification of the Black Panther Party during the Pepsi Super Bowl halftime show is the latest example of the war on police”<sup>39C</sup> while *Breitbart News*’s response claims, “the Black Lives Matter movement is merely the latest incarnation of the radical left’s activist community. The revolutionary communist anti-police group pays homage to convicted terrorist Assata Shakur at every event and cites the communist Black Panthers as a key influence.”<sup>40C</sup> Specifically addressing the Black Panthers in relation to Beyoncé’s performance, *The Daily Caller* details New York Congressman Peter King’s viral Facebook post. He writes, “The mainstream media’s acceptance of [Beyoncé’s] pro-Black Panther and anti-cop video ‘Formation’ and her Super Bowl appearance is just one more example of how acceptable it has become to be anti-police when it is the men and women in blue who put their lives on the line for all of us and deserve our strong support.”<sup>41C</sup> The author of *The Daily Caller*’s response does not include any overt endorsements of the anti-police nature of

---

<sup>39C</sup> Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime.”

<sup>40C</sup> Lee Stranahan, “Beyoncé Super Bowl Performance Pays Tribute to Black Panthers,” *Breitbart News*, February 8, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/big-hollywood/2016/02/08/2970258/>.

<sup>41C</sup> Kaitlan Collins, “Rep. King Bashes Beyoncé’s Super Bowl Performance: It Was ‘Pro-Black Panther and Anti-Cop,’” *The Daily Caller*, February 8, 2016, <http://dailycaller.com/2016/02/08/rep-king-bashes-beyonces-super-bowl-performance-it-was-pro-black-panther-and-anti-cop/>.

“Formation” in her own words; in fact, of the 259 words in the text of her response, only 72 are her own (excluding attribution phrases like “he wrote”) while the rest are quotes from Rep. King’s post. She does not balance his words with any quotes or sentiments that contradict his views, however, and considering the headline, “Rep. King Bashes [Beyoncé’s] Super Bowl Performance: It Was ‘Pro-Black Panther and Anti-Cop,’” she is doing little to remain neutral.

The assumed anti-police nature of the Party and BLM allows for some conservative responses to categorize Beyoncé’s performance as an attack on police without referencing either of the movements. Perhaps the most famous response like this comes from Rudy Giuliani on *Fox & Friends*, when he claims that Beyoncé used her platform to “attack police officers, who are the people who protect her and protect us and keep us alive.” He goes on to say, “What we should be doing, in the African-American community and in all communities, is build up respect for police officers and focus on the fact that when something does go wrong, okay, we’ll work on that.”<sup>42C</sup> Some conservative pieces include his quote without comment while others reiterate his opinion without quoting him (i.e. “It is called Formation, and the controversial video for the song adopts the same anti-police theme, as well as alluding to white racism in U.S. history”<sup>43C</sup>). Overall, conservative responses to the halftime show that classify the Black Panthers and Black Lives Matter as anti-police organizations serve to portray Beyoncé’s performance and music video as an attack on police.

---

<sup>42C</sup> “Fox & Friends Attacks.”

<sup>43C</sup> Tom Leonard, “Queen of Cynicism: No Stunt Too Shameless for Beyonce, Who Was Once Accused of Trying to Look White but This Week Posed as a Heroine of Black Power,” *The Daily Mail*, February 12, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3445116/Queen-cynicism-No-stunt-s-shameless-Beyonce-accused-trying-look-white-week-posed-heroine-black-power.html>.

### **Black Liberation as “Anti-Police”**

Conversely, liberal responses that include anti-police sentiments do not implicitly or explicitly endorse them, making “Black Liberation as ‘Anti-Police’” a liberal subdimension of the “Black Liberation as Anti-Police” conservative dimension. For example, *CBS*’s article also quotes Rep. King’s post, but afterward the author discreetly corrects his assumptions and places them into a larger context of race relations in the U.S.:

(While there were no direct references to police on the Super Bowl field, the video, released Saturday, features a young black child in a hoodie dancing in front of a line of police officers, and graffiti that reads "Stop Shooting Us.")

And all of this comes during heightened racial tensions across the country, particularly in regards to allegations of police brutality. Hollywood is grappling with issues of race as well, with Spike Lee, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith planning to skip the Academy Awards after no actors of color received Oscar nominations for a second year in a row.<sup>44L</sup>

By juxtaposing King’s statement with the video’s mere references to police while connecting it to nationwide racial tensions over police brutality, the author implies that they disagree with his anti-police categorization. *CBS*’s response also quotes Giuliani’s anti-police opinion but not before quoting a political science professor who commended Beyoncé’s activism. *CNN* and *MSNBC* both quote Giuliani as well but balance their responses with supportive quotes; the latter even subtly disregards Giuliani’s condemnation by following his quote with the line, “Still, in many circles, the ‘Formation’ video and its righteously defiant tone has gotten plenty of downright rapturous praise.”<sup>45L</sup> In this particular quote, the author implies which side they agree

---

<sup>44L</sup> “Beyonce’s Super Bowl Show Brings Praise and Criticism,” *CBS News*, February 9, 2016, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/beyonces-super-bowl-show-brings-praise-and-criticism/>.

with by stating that the video has a “righteously defiant tone.” Five of the 10 liberal responses that quote anti-police opinions either balance them with other supportive quotes, slyly disagree with them or outright reject them – the last of which is reflected in the following subdimension.

### **Black Liberation as Anti-Police Brutality**

Seven of the 10 liberal responses discuss Beyoncé’s allusions to police specifically with regard to police brutality as opposed to a general attack on police as many conservative responses do. *Al Jazeera America*’s opinion piece incorporates both notions, rejecting the anti-police categorization by carefully explaining the difference between critiquing police brutality and critiquing police altogether:

Those who see Beyoncé’s allusions to police racism as an attack on policing unwittingly assert that this racism is an essential and representative part of policing. They elide critiques of racist police violence with critiques of all police. It is they who call a hoodie-clad dancing black child a danger to policing, hauntingly echoing the police’s assertion that 12-year-old Tamir Rice presented a threat enough to justify a shot in the stomach.<sup>46L</sup>

The author repeats throughout the article that Beyoncé “did not attack police” and that the extent of her “‘attack’ was a simple reference to American police officers shooting black people,” asserting the existence of police brutality. *The New York Times* opinion piece similarly discredits Giuliani’s anti-police sentiment by turning the attention to police brutality:

---

<sup>45L</sup> Adam Howard, “Beyoncé Delivers Politically Charged Super Bowl Halftime Performance,” *MSNBC*, February 8, 2016, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/beyonce-delivers-politically-charged-super-bowl-halftime-performance>.

<sup>46L</sup> Natasha Lennard, “Why Are Cops Taking Beyoncé’s Black Affirmation as an Attack?” *Al Jazeera America*, February 9, 2016, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/2/why-are-cops-taking-beyonces-affirmation-of-black-strength-as-an-attack.html>.

I'm not sure, as usual, what Mr. Giuliani was talking about. He may have been referring to parts of the song and video "Formation" that deal with police violence against black Americans. But that's only an attack on police officers if you believe that they should not be restrained in their use of violence.<sup>47L</sup>

Additionally, *The Huffington Post*'s opinion piece cites statistics of racist police brutality, stating that "despite comprising only 13 percent of the population, African Americans represent 32 percent of the people shot and killed by the police" while calling upon the police that condemned Beyoncé to "come out with a statement that the police shootings referenced do not represent them or their members."<sup>48L</sup> These three authors are specifically discrediting the anti-police categorization of Beyoncé's halftime show by asserting that she was instead critiquing racist police brutality, as opposed to attacking all police. Other liberal responses that do not explicitly reject anti-police opinion also refer to racist police brutality as a concrete issue (unlike certain conservative responses, detailed in the "Black Liberation as Violent or Unfounded" dimension below). *BBC News*, for example, ends its response with the line, "Police in cities throughout the US have been subjected to intense scrutiny for using excessive and lethal force against suspects, many of them black."<sup>49</sup> *The Guardian* describes part of "Formation's" video as a reference to "the recent mass protests across the country over police killings of unarmed black men."<sup>50L</sup> By excluding anti-police sentiments, while asserting the existence of

---

<sup>47L</sup> Andrew Rosenthal, "Beyoncé's Halftime Show Inspires Ridiculous Criticism," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2016, <https://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/08/beyonces-halftime-show-inspires-ridiculous-criticism/>.

<sup>48L</sup> Dale Hansen, "Response to Beyoncé Shows How Far We Still Have to Go," *The Huffington Post*, February 23, 2016, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-hansen/response-to-beyonce-shows\\_b\\_9300448.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-hansen/response-to-beyonce-shows_b_9300448.html).

<sup>49L</sup> "Beyoncé's Super Bowl Performance: Why Was It So Significant?" *BBC News*, February 8, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-35520636>.

racist police brutality, these two authors take a position on Beyoncé’s references to police. The other five sources that contain this dimension and quote anti-police opinions either explicitly reject them (as *Al Jazeera America*, *The New York Times* and *The Huffington Post* do) or juxtapose them with assertions of racist police brutality. These rejections and assertions assign less credibility to the anti-police opinions than those included within or endorsed by conservative responses.

#### Black Liberation as Violent or Unfounded

Along with labeling Black liberation as anti-police, labeling the Black Panthers as a militant organization that promoted violence is another dimension that appears in four of the 10 conservative responses. Some specifically describe this notion as one that rejected Martin Luther King Jr.’s creed of non-violence; for example, Tomi Lahren states that, “The Black Panthers, for those who don’t know, were critical of Martin Luther King’s nonviolent Civil Rights movement. They didn’t believe in change through peace; they promoted violence instead.”<sup>51C</sup> A negative case of this dimension exists in *BBC News*’s response, echoing Lahren’s sentiment by describing the Panthers as a “militant [organization] that rejected the non-violent ideals of Martin Luther King.” Unlike Lahren, however, this author offers a justification by stating that the group was set up to “defend black people against violence.”<sup>52L</sup> Other conservative responses that describe the group as violent do so with little context or with a cynical take at best (i.e. “A row is raging in America over the fact that the gun-toting Black Panthers [Beyoncé] saluted were

---

<sup>50L</sup> Elgot, “Beyoncé Unleashes Black Panthers.”

<sup>51C</sup> Tomi Lahren, “Beyonce and the Black Panthers | Final Thoughts with Tomi Lahren,” *The Blaze*, February 11, 2016, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2O5MGpfKTc>.

<sup>52L</sup> “Beyonce’s Super Bowl Performance.”

murderous criminals who shot police, robbed and extorted under the cover of fighting for justice for African-Americans”<sup>53C</sup>).

Though in some instances Black Lives Matter is also labeled as violent (i.e. *Townhall* calling it a “‘racist, violent hate group’ that promotes cop killing”<sup>54C</sup>), a stronger pattern found in six of the 10 conservative reactions reveals an attempt to discredit the movement and its principles. For example, the *Conservative Tribune*’s response rejects the notion of racist police brutality altogether by stating, “The underlying premise to Beyoncé’s video was that police officers across America have been unfairly targeting black people for execution. This is a blatant lie that has been disproved countless times, yet racial grievance mongers like Beyoncé and her friends in the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement continue to peddle it.”<sup>55C</sup> Similarly, *Western Journalism* labels the Black Lives Matter movement as one that “involves nefarious individuals, unrealistic expectations (mostly of institutions of higher learning), racist and criminal activity.”<sup>56C</sup> Several conservative responses also attempt to discredit instances of police brutality associated with the movement, either by reiterating the acquittal of the perpetrator or denying the victim’s innocence. These notions are exemplified by the following quotes from *Townhall* and *The Daily Caller*:

---

<sup>53C</sup> Leonard, “Queen of Cynicism.”

<sup>54C</sup> Cortney O’Brien, “After Getting Police Escort, Beyonce Spews Black Lives Matter Message Aa Super Bowl,” *Townhall*, February 8, 2016, <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/cortneyobrien/2016/02/08/after-getting-police-escort-beyonce-spews-black-lives-matter-message-at-super-bowl-n2116455>.

<sup>55C</sup> Vivek Saxena, “Here’s Why American’s Sheriffs Turned Their Back During Beyoncé’s Performance,” *The Conservative Tribune*, February 8, 2016, <https://conservativetribune.com/americas-sherriffs-beyonce/>.

<sup>56C</sup> Kevin Whitson, “Photo from Right Before Beyonce’s Halftime Show Emerges, Changes the Entire Story,” *Western Journalism*, February 9, 2016, <https://www.westernjournalism.com/photo-from-right-before-beyonces-halftime-show-emerges-changes-the-entire-story/>.

The video appeared to make references to the Black Lives Matter movement and featured a young man who resembled Trayvon Martin, an African-American male killed by George Zimmerman in Florida a few years ago. In 2013, a jury acquitted Zimmerman of any wrongdoing, ruling he had acted in self-defense. The decision resulted in rioting and looting. Similar scenarios played out in Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland, where angry rioters threatened police and torched their cities.<sup>57C</sup>

‘Michael Brown was a criminal who had robbed a convenience store and then attempted to kill Police Officer Darren Wilson,’ [Rep. King] continued. ‘Michael Brown never raised his hands above his head and never tried to surrender. He was killed in self-defense by Officer Wilson after Brown first attempted to take the officer’s weapon away and then charged at him... Yet the big lie continues by Black Lives Matter, by pandering politicians and now by [Beyoncé], who gets star billing at the Super Bowl,’ King added.<sup>58C</sup>

By refuting or diminishing these instances of police brutality, the author of the *Townhall* piece and Rep. Peter King aim to discredit the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement and its supporters – in this case, Beyoncé and her dancers.

The case of Mario Woods is particularly pertinent to the halftime show because of the picture of Beyoncé’s dancers posing with a “Justice 4 Mario Woods” sign that appeared on Twitter after the performance. While the knife Woods was carrying is a focal point in many conservative responses – reinforcing the denial of innocence of victims of police violence – they often fail to provide additional evidence about the case. Consider the difference between these two descriptions of Woods:

After the performance, Beyoncé’s dancers posed with a sign that read “Justice 4 Mario Woods,” a career criminal and gang member who was shot and killed by San Francisco police after slashing a man with a knife and threatening others.<sup>59C</sup>

---

<sup>57C</sup> O’Brien, “After Getting Police Escort.”

<sup>58C</sup> Collins, “Rep. King Bashes.”

<sup>59C</sup> Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime.”

Woods, who was reportedly armed with a knife, was filmed as he was shot dead after being surrounded by about a dozen police officers. A lawyer representing Woods's family has called for the federal government to investigate the case for civil rights violations and examine whether any of the five officers involved should face criminal charges.<sup>60L</sup>

The first quote, from *Frontpage Magazine*, implies that Woods was dangerous and that his fate was justified; the second, from *The Guardian*, implies that excessive force from police likely led to a wrongful death. Conservative responses that aim to discredit the notion of racist police brutality aim to discredit Beyoncé's endorsement of Black Lives Matter and support for Mario Woods. Liberal responses that defend the movement and police brutality – as is reflected in the “Black Liberation as Anti-Police Brutality” subdimension – aim to defend Beyoncé's endorsements of them.

#### Black Liberation as Revolutionary and Warranted

When discussing Black liberation movements – specifically the Black Panthers – liberal responses typically do not portray a dangerous, anti-police history like conservative responses do. Instead, 40 percent of liberal responses depict more of a multifaceted image. For example, *The Guardian* details some of the Black Panthers' past, even mentioning the group's historically negative portrayal by the media:

The dancers' visual homage to the Black Panthers marked 50 years since the formation of the group, which had its roots in Oakland, less than 50 miles from the stadium where the Super Bowl took place. Founded by Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale, the movement was a revolutionary black nationalist [organization] and one of the most influential civil rights groups of the late 60s, but vilification in the media and some members' connections to illegal activities led the then FBI director, J Edgar Hoover, to call it ‘the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.’<sup>61L</sup>

---

<sup>60L</sup> Elgot, “Beyoncé Unleashes Black Panthers.”

<sup>61L</sup> Elgot, “Beyoncé Unleashes Black Panthers.”

The author recognizes the Party's adverse reputation but does not attribute it to the Party's own doing; instead, she defines it as a product of the media's "vilification" of the group and the illegal activities of "some members." She also refers to the group as revolutionary and influential, as opposed to dangerous or anti-police like some conservative authors might. *The New York Times* states that "the Panthers were no more racist than, say, the governor of Alabama or the state troopers in Selma in 1965, or the Democratic National Committee in 1968, or the Chicago police force in that year, or today. At least the Panthers could claim some provocation for their rage."<sup>62L</sup> The implication is that regardless of the Black Panthers' reputation or unfavorable elements – as highlighted by many conservative responses – its founding was warranted. Liberal responses that do not explicitly describe the Party as revolutionary or warranted still frame Beyoncé's tribute to it favorably (i.e. "As a nod to the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Black Panthers, Beyoncé emerged [in a Michael Jackson-inspired outfit] with a virtual battalion of beret-clad dancers who, true to the song's title, performed a flawlessly syncopated routine in unison"<sup>63L</sup>). These nuanced depictions paint a more positive image of the Black Panthers, shifting the focus of Beyoncé's support of them from a dangerous, anti-police statement to a more powerful and honorable one.

#### Black Liberation as Black Pride

Related to the more positive dimension of "Black Liberation as Revolutionary or Warranted," eight of the 10 liberal responses referred to Beyoncé's incorporation of Black liberation as an expression of Black pride or as celebrating Black history. The

---

<sup>62L</sup> Rosenthal, "Beyoncé's Halftime Show Inspires."

<sup>63L</sup> Howard, "Beyoncé Delivers Politically Charged."

opening sentence of *CBS*'s article about the responses to the show reads, "People are still parsing each frame from [Beyoncé's] halftime performance, trying to glean the messages, both subtle and overt, that made for a stunning display of unapologetic blackness and political activism during one of the most-watched events of the year;"<sup>64L</sup> *BBC News* states that the halftime show "references celebrated black figures of the past and recent black history" before quoting a description of the video as Beyoncé's becoming "every black southern woman possible for her to reasonably inhabit, moving through time, class, and space."<sup>65L</sup> Some liberal opinion pieces that reference Beyoncé's Black pride again do so in direct refutation of conservative condemnations of it. *The Huffington Post*, for example, references those who took issue with Beyoncé's tributes and asks, "Even if the entire performance was a reference to historic black leaders and groups, is there a problem with that? February is black history month, so paying tribute to those who fought against injustice and violence towards their community shouldn't be seen as an attack on whites as much as honoring past civil rights leaders."<sup>66L</sup> Alternatively, when *Breitbart News* attempts to discuss "Formation" in relation to Black identity, the author's surrounding commentary implies that he does not find it to be as honorable:

Although Beyoncé was trying to capture headlines by using politically incendiary imagery, the [song's] lyrics are mostly about black identity, a theme that goes back to songs like James Brown's 'Say It Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud' ... However, in 2016, black people being unashamed of being black is hardly newsworthy.<sup>67C</sup>

---

<sup>64L</sup> "Beyonce's Super Bowl Show."

<sup>65L</sup> "Beyonce's Super Bowl Performance."

<sup>66L</sup> Hansen, "Response to Beyoncé Shows."

<sup>67C</sup> Stranahan, "Beyoncé Super Bowl."

This initially appears to be a negative case of this dimension, but the author's tone does not support Beyoncé's Black pride as liberal responses do. Before stating that the lyrics are about Black identity, the author devalues Beyoncé's performance by claiming she was using "politically incendiary" images to gain attention; he then diminishes Black pride by calling it "hardly newsworthy."

One of the images he is referring to is of Beyoncé's dancers raising fists in a Black power salute, which is another element of the performance that is framed more positively and historically by liberal responses. *The New York Times*'s response gives perhaps the most detailed account of the black power salute, connecting its appearance in the 1968 Summer Olympics to Beyoncé's present-day incorporation:

What do Beyoncé, Tommie Smith and John Carlos have in common? They all managed to get the white political establishment to sputter in outrage by daring to celebrate their identity and mention – gasp – racial politics at a public event. In 1968, Mr. Smith and Mr. Carlos, who had won the gold and bronze medals in the 200-meter race at the Mexico City Olympics, bowed their heads and raised their arms in a clenched-fist salute during their medal ceremony. Politicians and talking heads were furious at this political gesture at the Olympics, where the carrying of national flags and the playing of national anthems are revered traditions — and political gestures to their core.<sup>68L</sup>

The author later sarcastically states, "(And, yes, Beyoncé and her backup dancers raised their fists in the air during their Super Bowl performance – imagine that!)" He is revealing that not only does he find the criticism to be unreasonable (especially given the piece's title "Beyoncé's Halftime Show Inspires Ridiculous Criticism") but that he is purposefully comparing Beyoncé's salute a similar historical setting that produced the same kinds of reactions. Conservative responses that mention the salute do so without

---

<sup>68L</sup> Rosenthal, "Beyoncé's Halftime Show Inspires."

this context and/or tend to frame it negatively, like simply referring to the Black power salute as “infamous.”<sup>69C</sup>

Overall, liberal responses that discuss Beyoncé’s references to Black liberation movements as an expression of her Black identity generally do so favorably. Conservative mentions of such praise are generally characterized by sarcasm or disagreement (i.e. “‘Formation’ and has been described as a celebration of black pride but it is more of a witchy race baiting anti-police anthem”<sup>70C</sup>), offering weak negative cases of this dimension. Another common theme when discussing Beyoncé’s Black identity and/or political message of Black liberation is to situate “Formation” within the context of her past.

### **Beyoncé: An Unqualified Messenger or an Evolving Activist?**

Beyoncé’s race, wealth and reputation are often integrated into both liberal and conservative responses to the halftime show, making her overall credibility as a messenger the second theme in this analysis. A dimension of the Beyoncé theme within 30 percent of conservative responses include describing “Beyoncé as Too White or Too Rich,” while a dimension of this theme within 50 percent of liberal responses includes describing “Beyoncé as an Evolving Activist.”

#### **Beyoncé as Too White or Too Rich**

When referring to her expression of Black pride and/or support of Black liberation movements, some conservative responses frame them as hypocritical because of Beyoncé’s history of alleged colorism. *The Daily Mail* discusses this at length, calling her

---

<sup>69C</sup> Leonard, “Queen of Cynicism.”

<sup>70C</sup> Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime.”

the “queen of contradictions” before claiming that she is “fighting for black rights after years of being derided as ‘too white’ in her cultural outlook and appearance.” The author states:

Yet [Beyoncé] also spent years avoiding being labelled an African-American performer. After all, to have done so might have [jeopardized] her bid to become a 'cross-over' superstar with both black and white audiences. Black critics have long complained the super-ambitious star has avoided addressing race issues and indeed — like her hero Michael Jackson — she has even been accused of trying to make herself look more white. She has dyed her hair honey-[colored] blonde and faced persistent accusations — which she hotly denies — that she has whitened her already relatively light skin. A 2012 album cover and her adverts for cosmetics firm L'Oreal both prompted accusations of 'digital lightening'. L'Oreal insisted there was no tinkering, but an online poll asked if the transformation wasn't a 'slap to blacks'.<sup>71C</sup>

The author cites other perceived contradictions, like Beyoncé “claiming to be a feminist when her act would shame a stripper,” all of which aim to discredit the singer and paint her as a figure who has no business in racial politics or in expressing Black pride.

*MSNBC* offers a negative case of this dimension by including this kind of criticism, but frames it less definitively: “Ironically, for much of her early years in the spotlight, Beyoncé was dinged for having a lack of substance and even more insidiously, for perhaps being a willing victim of colorism. And yet in ‘Formation,’ when she proudly declares her affinity for her ‘Jackson Five nostrils,’ there can be no doubt anymore about where Beyoncé stands and who she stands with.”<sup>72L</sup> The last sentence indicates that this author, unlike *The Daily Mail*'s, does not find it hypocritical for Beyoncé to express or celebrate her Blackness.

---

<sup>71C</sup> Leonard, “Queen of Cynicism.”

<sup>72L</sup> Howard, “Beyoncé Delivers Politically Charged.”

Another hypocrisy described in certain conservative responses to “Formation” is that both Beyoncé’s wealth and modest upbringing should exclude her from the ability to talk about Black economic liberation, as *Breitbart News* sums up:

The irony, of course, is that Beyoncé Knowles and Jay-Z owe their success to the capitalist system the leftist Black Lives Matter movement is intent on destroying. Jay-Z’s story of going from rags to riches is well-known, as he went from being a drug dealer in the projects of New York to becoming an entertainment star and entrepreneur. Beyoncé is the child of a small business owner and a sales manager for Xerox. Both biographies fly in the face of the Black Lives Matter narrative that black people somehow need to be ‘liberated’ from the free market.<sup>73C</sup>

*The Daily Mail* contains a similarly sarcastic sentiment, claiming that Beyoncé’s wealth “flatly refutes the central complaint of the Black Lives Matter movement, that African-Americans’ lives are all disastrously blighted by racism.”<sup>74C</sup> Both authors make these assumptions to insult the cause of BLM and, therefore, to question Beyoncé’s authenticity in endorsing it. *The Washington Post*’s opinion piece, on the other hand, refers to her wealth but without a condescending tone: “Yes, Beyoncé is still a one-percenter, but she doesn’t seem disconnected, or even fake-connected. Her halftime gig reminded us of this. The woman was literally on the ground.”<sup>75L</sup> Again, a negative case of this dimension exists within a liberal reaction by mentioning her wealth, but the author does not use it to discredit her as a messenger.

#### Beyoncé as an Evolving Activist

The quotes from *MSNBC* and *The Washington Post* demonstrate that liberal responses tend to be less critical of Beyoncé as a messenger than conservative responses.

---

<sup>73C</sup> Stranahan, “Beyoncé Super Bowl.”

<sup>74C</sup> Leonard, “Queen of Cynicism.”

<sup>75L</sup> Richards, “The Night Beyoncé Won.”

Half of the liberal responses include sentiments that applaud her evolving activism and choice to bring politics onto a mainstream stage. *CNN*'s response includes a quote about the ingenuity of Beyoncé's emerging activism as she gains access to larger platforms: "There's definitely an evolution going on with Beyoncé. It shows you how smart she is. She's tapping into the same consumer culture that she's always tapped into but she's doing it with some political overtones," [Bakari] Kitwana said.<sup>76L</sup> A mention of how Beyoncé's charity, BeyGood, helped out residents of the Flint water crisis implies that the author supports Beyoncé's activism. Similarly, *MSNBC* praises Beyoncé's "steadily more socially conscious persona"<sup>77L</sup> while *CBS* quotes a political science professor who likens Beyoncé to other celebrities, like LeBron James, who are "moving toward public activism."<sup>78L</sup> *The Washington Post* refers to her activism a bit facetiously but positively nonetheless: "And for an artist cranking up the politics this far into her fame, she might deserve an entire chapter in the great book of celebrity miracles."<sup>79L</sup> These liberal responses spare criticism of Beyoncé for the perceived political silence of her past more so than conservative responses. They also praise her decision to bring politics into the Super Bowl more than conservative responses do.

### **The Super Bowl: The Wrong or Right Place for Politics?**

The appropriateness of inserting politics into a mainstream event like the Super Bowl is the final theme among both liberal and conservative responses to the performance of "Formation." A dimension of this theme within conservative responses

---

<sup>76L</sup> Zaru, "Beyonce Gets Political."

<sup>77L</sup> Howard, "Beyoncé Delivers Politically Charged."

<sup>78L</sup> "Beyonce's Super Bowl Show."

<sup>79L</sup> Richards, "The Night Beyoncé Won."

includes describing “The Super Bowl as the Wrong Place for Politics,” either by framing it as a disruption of the Super Bowl’s patriotic environment or by claiming that bringing racial politics into it disturbs its racially-transcendent atmosphere. A dimension of this theme within liberal responses includes describing “The Super Bowl as the Right Place for Politics,” either by welcoming a political disruption to offset the typical dullness of the event or seeing it as a necessary disturbance of the racist patriotism that plagues the sport.

#### The Super Bowl as the Wrong Place for Politics

Five of the 10 conservative responses take issue with Beyoncé presenting a political message in a setting like the Super Bowl. *The Daily Mail*, for example, mentions the “staggering inappropriateness — not to mention arrogance — of hijacking America’s biggest family event for such a dubious tribute.”<sup>80C</sup> Rudy Giuliani recognizes that performing at the halftime show puts Beyoncé in a “political position” that she’s “probably going to take advantage of” but not before insinuating that she shouldn’t: “You’re talking to middle America when you have the Super Bowl, so you can have entertainment. Let’s have, you know, decent wholesome entertainment, and not use it as a platform to attack the people who, you know, put their lives at risk to save us.”<sup>81C</sup> *Frontpage Magazine* refers to the Super Bowl as “the very symbol of American identity” and claims that its sanctioning of Beyoncé’s performance “demonstrates that the mythology of institutional racism and the war on police just reached a new level of incitement.”<sup>82C</sup> All three quotes refer to the “American” nature of the event, and their

---

<sup>80C</sup> Leonard, “Queen of Cynicism.”

<sup>81C</sup> “Fox & Friends Attacks.”

negative framing of Beyoncé's performance imply that it was un-American. Giuliani's and *Frontpage's* quotes also reiterate the anti-police argument while the latter claims that institutional racism is a myth.

Tomi Lahren's comments are similar; she says:

“The Super Bowl: the most watched event on television, a game that brings Americans of every color, background and political party together, a game where black fans cheer next to white fans, a game where teammates work together as one regardless of race, a celebration of diversity rooted in a common bond. But forget that!”<sup>83C</sup>

Here she paints a picture of racial harmony, and her final exclamation implies that Beyoncé purposefully upsets it. Later, she claims:

[Beyoncé], just like President Obama, Jada Pinkett-Smith, Al Sharpton and so many others, just can't let America heal. Keep ripping off the historical Band-Aid. Why be a cultural leader when you can play the victim, right?<sup>84C</sup>

Following her sentiment about the disruption of a racially-transcendent and patriotic Super Bowl, she blames Beyoncé and others for perpetuating racism by drawing attention to it. *The New York Post* quotes a tweet from conservative commentator Michelle Malkin, echoing Lahren's notion of racial divisiveness: “Cuz nothing brings us all together better than angry @Beyonce shaking her ass & shouting ‘Negro’ repeatedly.” However, the author balances Malkin's condemnation by quoting other supportive tweets; for example, he writes, “DeRay Mckesson, a prominent leader in the Black Lives Matter movement, also appreciated the political display. ‘The #Formation shout-outs to Malcolm X & MJ were excellent,’ he tweeted.” Balancing both positive and negative reactions of

---

<sup>82C</sup> Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime.”

<sup>83C</sup> Lahren, “Beyonce and the Black Panthers.”

<sup>84C</sup> Lahren, “Beyonce and the Black Panthers.”

Beyoncé’s politics at the Super Bowl, as well as generally framing other elements of the performance favorably (i.e. referring to Beyoncé as a “megastar” and saying that she “belted out her new politically charged power anthem”<sup>85C</sup>), posits *The New York Post* as a mostly negative case against the rest of the conservative reactions that claim Beyoncé’s politics were inappropriate at the Super Bowl.

#### The Super Bowl as the Right Place for Politics

Five of the 10 liberal responses also comment on the setting for “Formation” but frame the Super Bowl as an appropriate place for politics. *CNN* provides a quote that highlights the necessity of Beyoncé’s message at the mainstream event: “‘I think [the message] absolutely belongs in the Super Bowl,’ [Black Lives Matter activist Erika] Totten said. ‘Our goal is to disrupt the status quo and bring the message wherever the message may not be heard.’”<sup>86L</sup> *The New Yorker* introduces a more detailed account of Beyoncé’s task of tackling the halftime show:

The video is everything the halftime show historically has not been: politically charged, visually daring, sexy, confrontational, [reveling] in Southern black femininity. Here was Beyoncé, forcibly rejecting the milquetoast white center of popular culture before planning a visit to what has been, in many years, its main stage, as a guest of her friend Chris Martin. Would she provide a necessary disruption at the Super Bowl, or would she temper her message for America’s sake? Beyoncé, of course, was able to do both.<sup>87L</sup>

---

<sup>85C</sup> Chris Perez, “Beyoncé Honors Black Panther Party During Halftime Show,” *The New York Post*, February 8, 2016, <http://nypost.com/2016/02/08/beyonce-honors-black-panther-party-during-halftime-show/>.

<sup>86L</sup> Zaru, “Beyonce Gets Political.”

<sup>87L</sup> Carrie Battan, “Beyoncé Sacks the Super Bowl Halftime Show,” *The New Yorker*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/beyonce-sacks-the-super-bowl-halftime-show>.

This “necessary disruption” for the author is primarily concerned with the safeness and whiteness of what the halftime show typically encompasses. *The Washington Post* describes the halftime show as the “most widely witnessed musical performance in our country each year, but very few artists seem interested in rising up to the moment.” Beyoncé, however, did rise to the moment, according to the author: “[She] knew everyone was listening. She knew that it was her duty to say something significant. So she did.”<sup>88L</sup> This author considers the Super Bowl to be a place where statements should be made, as opposed one void of controversy like many conservative responses tend to frame it.

Some liberal responses also reflect on the patriotic nature of the Super Bowl, but more explicitly refer to its racist tendencies. For example, *The New York Times* wrote: “If Beyoncé had come out and sung ‘I’m Proud to Be an American’ and put her hand on her heart for the national anthem, would that have been O.K. with Mr. Giuliani? I mean, as long as no one had an Afro?” The author also comments on the laughably “‘wholesome’ nature of a giant corporation that counts among its number a team called the Redskins.”<sup>89L</sup> *The Huffington Post* more broadly addresses this exclusive patriotism, stating, “We as a country celebrate those who fought for this country and protected it from tyranny, yet we label those in the African American community who spoke out against undeniable oppression and occasionally turned to violence, as a means to protect themselves, as terrorist.”<sup>90L</sup> This specific version of patriotism within the NFL is

---

<sup>88L</sup> Richards, “The Night Beyoncé Won.”

<sup>89L</sup> Rosenthal, “Beyoncé’s Halftime Show Inspires.”

<sup>90L</sup> Hansen, “Response to Beyoncé Shows.”

described simply as racist by these authors but is more lightly described as colorblind by someone like Tomi Lahren. This distinction is important because it directly correlates to the difference in interpretations from liberal versus conservative audiences: those who view racism as a prominent issue both in the U.S. and NFL would welcome an insertion of racial politics into the Super Bowl while those who view racism as an exaggerated myth would reject such politics.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this thematic analysis ultimately support my prediction that praise and condemnation of Beyoncé's "Formation" performance are most consistently divided along partisan lines. Conservative responses overwhelmingly condemned the performance of "Formation" because they disagreed with its message of Black liberation, its messenger as Beyoncé and its setting as the Super Bowl while liberal responses generally praised the performance because of these elements. Even when negative cases of dimensions are presented, they almost always exist along with notions that fall in line with the general support or opposition. The next chapter examines two of these three themes rhetorically to explain their properties as general phenomena within the ideology of conservatism.

**Table 1: Themes and Dimensions**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Sources</b>
I. Black Liberation	A. As anti-police a. As “anti-police” b. As anti-police brutality B. As violent/unfounded C. As revolutionary/warranted D. As black pride	A. Conservative a. Liberal b. Liberal B. Conservative C. Liberal D. Liberal
II. Beyoncé	A. As too white/too rich B. As an evolving activist	A. Conservative B. Liberal
III. Super Bowl	A. As inappropriate for politics B. As appropriate for politics	A. Conservative B. Liberal

## | CHAPTER THREE |

UNSTATED ASSUMPTIONS: AN ENTHYMEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THEMES  
WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVE MEDIA'S RESPONSE

In this chapter, I examine two of the three main themes from my thematic analysis: Black Liberation and the Super Bowl. I develop these themes using the enthymeme as a rhetorical device, which I use to explain the unstated, ideologically-rooted premises within the conservative media's responses to "Formation." I examine only the conservative dimensions of these themes to uncover why and how the principles of conservatism are reproduced within its media's rejection of Beyoncé's performance, as opposed to uncovering liberal media's acceptance. I first define the rhetorical enthymeme before detailing how its unstated premises function within the conservative dimensions of the Black Liberation and Super Bowl themes. I argue that two elements of conservatism – its respect for law and order and its embracement of patriotism – reveal these unstated premises, which serve as foundations for the media's condemnation of Beyoncé's halftime show. Through an enthymematic analysis, I argue that these elements of conservatism are rooted in its underlying connection to whiteness and racism.

Lloyd Bitzer's definition of Aristotle's enthymeme is useful when understanding an audience's assumptions in interpreting a speaker's message. He claims the enthymeme is an "incomplete syllogism...having one or more suppressed premises," meaning that "the speaker does not lay down his premises but lets his audience supply them out of its stock of opinion and knowledge" in order for rhetorical persuasion to occur.<sup>91</sup> The "audience" I am primarily focused on in this chapter is the conservative media itself – the

---

<sup>91</sup> Bitzer, "Aristotle's Enthymeme Revisited," 407.

writers, hosts and pundits who produced the responses to Beyoncé’s halftime show. They have their own audience – their readers, listeners and viewers – and they present messages that reinforce that audience’s “stock of opinion and knowledge,” ideologically speaking. Jamieson and Cappella also invoke Aristotle’s enthymeme as a means of persuasion when detailing the ideological reinforcement between the conservative media and its audience. They state that upon consuming media, the “audience invests a message with presupposed but unarticulated premises.” Therefore, “audiences enter the political arena with existing attitudes and preferences. Once there, they are more likely than not to seek out information that is compatible with these beliefs and shun data that challenge them.”<sup>92</sup> The authors declare that these interactive processes between the media and its audiences produce an “echo chamber,” which captures the “ways messages are amplified and reverberate through the conservative opinion media.”<sup>93</sup> The media’s role, then, is to help foster what the authors call “a self-protective enclave hospitable to conservative beliefs.”<sup>94</sup>

The effectiveness of this echo chamber is evident in statistics about the media choices that conservative audiences make. For example, along with naming *Fox News* as their primary news source, Pew’s 2014 study found that “consistent conservatives” – or those who consistently express conservative views, as opposed to a moderate or fiscal conservative – are also “twice as likely as the typical Facebook user to see political opinions [online] that are mostly in line with their own views.”<sup>95</sup> This constant

---

<sup>92</sup> Kathleen H. Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella; *Echo chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the conservative media establishment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75.

<sup>93</sup> Jamieson and Cappella, *Echo Chamber*, 76.

<sup>94</sup> Jamieson and Cappella, *Echo Chamber*, x.

reinforcement of beliefs between the conservative media and its audience allows for persuasion to occur *because* of conservatism's overarching power as a worldview.

Jamieson and Cappella's book (and this chapter) should not imply that echo chambers *only* exist within conservative media. They are also present within the liberal media and its audience; op-eds from *The Independent*<sup>96</sup> and *The Guardian*<sup>97</sup> have claimed that the politically-isolating effects of liberal echo chambers, especially within social media, lost the 2016 presidential election for Democrats. Nevertheless, this chapter focuses on the relationship between conservative media responses to Beyoncé's halftime show and their enthymematic assumptions as a product of conservatism. Jamieson and Cappella's work is also specifically about conservative opinion media, focusing on the opinion pages of *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Rush Limbaugh Show* and *Fox News*. Though the sample of conservative media responses in my thematic analysis contains both opinion and "news," according to each response's self-identification, my analysis shows that the "news" pieces about the performance contain opinionated sentiments. Therefore, for this rhetorical analysis, I consider all conservative media from my sample to reflect conservative beliefs and opinions, regardless of a "news," or objective, categorization.

---

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiley and Matsa, "Political Polarization."

<sup>96</sup> Christopher Hooton, "Social Media Echo Chambers Gifted Donald Trump the Presidency," *The Independent*, November 10, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/donald-trump-president-social-media-echo-chamber-hypernormalisation-adam-curtis-protests-blame-a7409481.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Olivia Solon, "Facebook Failure: Did Fake News and Polarized Politics Get Trump Elected?" *The Guardian*, November 10, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/nov/10/facebook-fake-news-election-conspiracy-theories>.

### Black Liberation v. Law and Order

As my thematic analysis demonstrates, 70 percent of the conservative media responses to Beyoncé’s halftime performance include the perception that it was an attack on police, which is based upon a common conservative belief that the Black Panthers and Black Lives Matter movement are inherently anti-police. This assumption is reiterated within both the responses to the performance and related material: The author of *Townhall*’s response, for example, implicitly agrees with Giuliani’s outrage over Beyoncé “*clearly* [using] her performance to convey an anti-police message,”<sup>98</sup> and when writing about BLM at the end of the article, she endorses another *Townhall* piece titled, “Exposing The Black Lives Matter Movement For What It Is: Promotion of Cop Killing.”<sup>99</sup> The perpetuation of this anti-police reputation of Black Lives Matter is partly based upon the few instances of antagonism or violence against police that have been associated with the movement. These instances include a widely-circulated clip of protestors chanting “pigs in a blanket, fry em’ like bacon” at a BLM rally in 2015,<sup>100</sup> as well as multiple shootings of police officers wherein the perpetrators claimed they did so to avenge Black victims of police brutality.<sup>101,102</sup> Though BLM has denounced acts like

---

<sup>98</sup> O’Brien, “After Getting Police Escort.”

<sup>99</sup> Katie Pavlich, “Exposing The Black Lives Matter Movement for What It Is: Promotion of Cop Killing,” *Townhall*. September 2, 2015, <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/katiepavlich/2015/09/02/exposing-black-lives-matter-for-what-it-is-promotion-of-cop-killing-n2046941>.

<sup>100</sup> “‘Pigs in a Blanket’ Chant at Minnesota Riles Police,” *CBS News*, August 31, 2015, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pigs-in-a-blanket-chant-at-minnesota-fair-riles-police/>.

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Mueller and Al Baker, “2 N.Y.P.D. Officers Killed in Brooklyn Ambush; Suspect Commits Suicide,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/two-police-officers-shot-in-their-patrol-car-in-brooklyn.html? r=0>.

<sup>102</sup> Faith Karimi, “Dallas Sniper Attack: 5 Officers Killed, Suspect Identified,” *CNN*, July 9, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/08/us/philando-castile-alton-sterling-protests/index.html>.

these, as well as claimed that they do not represent the movement’s goals,<sup>103</sup> much of the conservative media continue to cite these acts as being representative of the entire movement.<sup>104,105</sup> In doing so, conservative media authors and pundits from sources such as *Townhall* and *The Blaze* are drawing from their stock of knowledge about Black Lives Matter to perpetuate its anti-police categorization when responding to situations that involve or support the movement, like the performance of “Formation.”

The conservative media’s audience can extract from its own stock of knowledge – much of which, as Jamieson and Cappella articulate, is supplied by the conservative media itself – to maintain an anti-police opinion about BLM both when watching the performance and consuming the media’s response. The media’s perpetuation of BLM’s negative reputation is evident in the instances where authors responding to “Formation” at the Super Bowl do not explicitly state that the movement is anti-police: For example, the headline of *Townhall*’s response reads, “After Getting Police Escort, [Beyoncé] Spews Black Lives Matter Message at Super Bowl.”<sup>106</sup> The implied assumption there is that Beyoncé is hypocritical for benefitting from police protection and following it with an anti-police message during her halftime show. It is this enthymematic assumption – that Black Lives Matter is inherently anti-police – whether implicitly or explicitly stated,

---

<sup>103</sup> Hillary Hanson, “#BlackLivesMatter Condemns NYPD Cop Killings: ‘Not Our Vision of Justice,’” *The Huffington Post*, December 21, 2014, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/21/nypd-cop-killings-blacklivesmatter\\_n\\_6362400.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/21/nypd-cop-killings-blacklivesmatter_n_6362400.html).

<sup>104</sup> Art Tavana, “Tomi Lahren Exclusively Talks to Playboy After Her Blaze Fallout,” *Playboy*, May 2, 2017, <http://www.playboy.com/articles/tomi-lahren-playboy-conversation>.

<sup>105</sup> Kim Bellware, “Sean Hannity Draws Comparison Between Black Lives Matter and KKK,” *The Huffington Post*, October 22, 2015, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/sean-hannity-black-lives-matter-kkk\\_us\\_5628ff2ee4b0ec0a38936571](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/sean-hannity-black-lives-matter-kkk_us_5628ff2ee4b0ec0a38936571).

<sup>106</sup> O’Brien, “After Getting Police Escort.”

that allows for both the conservative media and its audience to perceive moments like “Formation” at Super Bowl 50 as an attack on police.

The overpowering anti-police label of Black Lives Matter mirrors the anti-police label of the Black Panthers in the 1960s, as they became “known more for their histrionics and showdowns with police than their community survival programs.”<sup>107</sup> The conservative media’s condemnation of past and present Black liberation movements involves more than just their choice to emphasize negative information about them; it also involves the ideological aspects of conservatism that are at odds with the perceived goals of these movements. One example is conservatism’s “obedience to and respect for authority,”<sup>108</sup> which includes law enforcement. This conservative respect for and faith in law enforcement is reflected in Pew Research Center’s 2017 study on Americans’ confidence in police: Between 73 and 79 percent of Republicans believed “police around the country are doing an excellent or good job when it comes to:” 1) “protecting people from crime,” 2) “holding officers accountable when misconduct occurs,” 3) “using the right amount of force for each situation” and 4) “treating racial and ethnic groups equally.”<sup>109</sup> Respect for and faith in police, then, implies that perceived critiques of or affronts to police are generally unwelcomed. In interpreting Beyoncé’s performance as an “attack” on police – rooted in the enthymematic assumption that the Black Panthers and Black Lives Matter exist to antagonize law enforcement – conservative media responses reflect conservatism’s loyalty to and respect for police.

---

<sup>107</sup> Jeffries and Nissim-Sabat, “Introduction,” x.

<sup>108</sup> Kerlinger, “Liberalism and Conservatism,” 17.

<sup>109</sup> Anna Brown, “Republicans More Likely Than Democrats to Have Confidence in Police,” *Pew Research Center*, January 13, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/13/republicans-more-likely-than-democrats-to-have-confidence-in-police/>.

The more insidious implication of conservatism’s respect for law enforcement, as it pertains to denouncing Black liberation movements, is its history of supporting law and order at the expense of Black Americans. For example, the commonly-used phrase “law and order” is the conclusion to an enthymeme itself, most notably adopted by conservatives in the 1960s as a code for implementing racist laws and policies to deal with the national surge in crime. In comparing Donald Trump’s adoption of law and order politics with Richard Nixon’s, Andrea Pitzer writes:

In a diary entry from 1969, White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman paraphrased Nixon’s thinking: “You have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to.” During the campaign Nixon’s team tackled this challenge by adopting a strategy of “law and order”—by playing to racist fears, they could cloak divisive rhetoric in an unobjectionable demand for security during a chaotic era.<sup>110</sup>

Pitzer details the continued political use of the phrase – within the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and even Bill Clinton – before articulating her argument: “For centuries, the rhetoric of law and order has been used to intimidate black Americans, limit voting rights, and hobble the influence of minority religions.” The conservative invocation of “law and order” is directly tied to the suppression of Black liberation, both in response to the Civil Rights movement in the past and Black Lives Matter today. On the day of his inauguration, Trump’s White House issued a statement saying it “pledged to be a ‘law and order administration’ while stopping what it characterized as a ‘dangerous anti-police atmosphere in America.’” The statement also said, “Our job is not to make life more comfortable for the rioter, the looter, or the violent disrupter” and that “supporting law enforcement means supporting our citizens’ ability to

---

<sup>110</sup> Andrea Pitzer, “The Bitter History of Law and Order in America,” *Longreads*, April 2017, <https://longreads.com/2017/04/06/the-bitter-history-of-law-and-order-in-america/>.

protect themselves.”<sup>111</sup> Given Trump’s opposition to Black Lives Matter – exemplified by once calling its namesake “a very divisive term, because all lives matter”<sup>112</sup> and inciting violence upon a BLM protestor at one of his campaign rallies<sup>113</sup> – his administration’s statements are aimed to directly oppress it. Not only is he invoking the conservative assumption that the movement is anti-police, he is utilizing conservatism’s adoration of “law and order” as a means to offer a justification for its suppression. The conservative rejection of Black Lives Matter, then, involves more than just an objective respect for police; it must specifically involve upholding a respect for police at the expense of people of color.

*Al Jazeera America*’s response to critics of Beyoncé’s halftime show perhaps summarizes this notion best:

Those who see Beyoncé’s allusions to police racism as an attack on policing unwittingly assert that this racism is an essential and representative part of policing. They elide critiques of racist police violence with critiques of all police. It is they who call a hoodie-clad dancing black child a danger to policing, hauntingly echoing the police’s assertion that 12-year-old Tamir Rice presented a threat enough to justify a shot in the stomach.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Josh Sanburn, “President Trump Just Signaled Some Dramatic Changes for Police and Criminal Justice,” *Time*, January 20, 2017, <http://time.com/4641374/trump-inuaguration-police-protestors-justice/>.

<sup>112</sup> David Weigel, “Three Words That Republicans Wrestle with: ‘Black Lives Matter,’” *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/three-words-that-republicans-wrestle-with-black-lives-matter/2016/07/12/f5a9dfdc-4878-11e6-90a8-fb84201e0645\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.0cbbb52462de](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/three-words-that-republicans-wrestle-with-black-lives-matter/2016/07/12/f5a9dfdc-4878-11e6-90a8-fb84201e0645_story.html?utm_term=.0cbbb52462de).

<sup>113</sup> Jenna Johnson and Mary Jordan, “Trump on Rally Protestor: ‘Maybe He Should Have Been Roughed Up,’” *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/22/black-activist-punched-at-donald-trump-rally-in-birmingham/?utm\\_term=.d84662f5ac2c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/22/black-activist-punched-at-donald-trump-rally-in-birmingham/?utm_term=.d84662f5ac2c).

<sup>114</sup> Lennard, “Why Are Cops.”

Equating the critiques of racist police brutality to an attack on all police simultaneously upholds conservatism's faith in law enforcement and denies that racist police brutality is a problem altogether. The latter is another common assumption argued by conservatives in multiple ways, such as comparing police shootings of Black Americans to Black-on-Black crime or reinforcing the criminality of people of color; the "Black Liberation as Violent or Unfounded" dimension in my thematic analysis highlights this assumption. *The Conservative Tribune's* claim that racist police brutality is a "blatant lie,"<sup>115</sup> for example, is linked to another *Tribune* piece that "destroys" the agenda of Black Lives Matter by asserting "that most black victims die at the hands of violent black criminals, not police officers"<sup>116</sup> *Frontpage Magazine's* dubbing of Mario Woods as a "career criminal and gang member" is another example.<sup>117</sup> This denial of racist police brutality by reinforcing the criminality of Black Americans sustains conservatism's respect for and faith in law enforcement but does so by demonizing people of color. It fortifies the assumption that Black Lives Matter exists only to antagonize police – and that Beyoncé's performance did the same – by undermining the actual problems facing Black Americans that the movement aims to address.

The racially oppressive nature of "law and order" as it exists within conservatism allows for conservative media to demonize Black liberation and its iterations, like "Formation," as a threat to police or even to national security: The FBI had at one time

---

<sup>115</sup> Saxena, "Here's Why America."

<sup>116</sup> Vivek Saxena, "Black Lives Matter Has Entire Agenda Destroyed with New Data About Black 'Victims,'" *The Conservative Tribune*, January 28, 2016, <https://conservativetribune.com/black-lives-matter-agenda-data/>.

<sup>117</sup> Perlmutter, "Super Bowl Halftime."

categorized the Panthers as “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country”<sup>118</sup> and currently lists BLM, or what they call “Black Identity Extremists,” as a domestic terrorist group.<sup>119</sup> Considering Black liberation movements to be a threat to the country contributes to the second assumption about “Formation” at the Super Bowl, which is that it was anti-American.

### **Super Bowl v. Colorblind Patriotism**

My thematic analysis reveals that the conservative media not only took issue with what Beyoncé presented in her performance but also *where* she chose to say it. While most of the conservative media responses interpret “Formation” as anti-police, half of the responses interpret the performance as anti-American because it is a disruption of the Super Bowl as a “symbol of American identity.”<sup>120</sup> Because the Super Bowl maintains the title of the most-watched televised event in the United States every year and professional football is consistently listed as America’s favorite sport,<sup>121</sup> the American nature of the NFL and the Super Bowl is not simply of the conservative imagination. Classifying “Formation” as un- or anti-American, then, involves the assumption that Beyoncé’s performance was an unacceptable expression of American identity. This assumption is rooted in both conservatism’s and the NFL’s endorsement of a colorblind patriotism.

---

<sup>118</sup> Elgot, “Beyoncé Unleashes Black Panthers.”

<sup>119</sup> Shanelle Matthews and Malkia Cyril, “We Say Black Lives Matter. The FBI Says That Makes Us a Security Threat,” *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/10/19/we-say-black-lives-matter-the-fbi-says-that-makes-us-a-security-threat/?tid=hybrid\\_collaborative\\_3\\_na&utm\\_term=.42b9d5835e65](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/10/19/we-say-black-lives-matter-the-fbi-says-that-makes-us-a-security-threat/?tid=hybrid_collaborative_3_na&utm_term=.42b9d5835e65).

<sup>120</sup> Perlmutter, “Super Bowl Halftime.”

<sup>121</sup> “Pro Football is Still America’s Favorite Sport,” *The Harris Poll*, January 26, 2016, [http://www.theharrispoll.com/sports/Americas\\_Fav\\_Sport\\_2016.html](http://www.theharrispoll.com/sports/Americas_Fav_Sport_2016.html).

Being “concerned greatly with a love of the familiar,”<sup>122</sup> conservatism has been positively correlated with patriotism; last year, 61 percent of conservatives reported they were “extremely proud” to be Americans while 36 percent of liberals said the same.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, American football is explicitly tied to patriotism: The NFL’s incorporation of patriotism at each game is made clear by the “frequent appearances of the American flag” and “celebrity productions of the national anthem.”<sup>124</sup> It is also evidenced inconspicuously by the more than 12 million dollars from the United States Department of Defense and National Guard paid to the League between 2009 and 2015 in order to “stage onfield patriotic ceremonies as part of military-recruitment budget line items.”<sup>125</sup> Not surprisingly, Sorek and White’s 2016 study found that high levels of football fandom were correlated with high levels of national pride but that the nature of this relation differs by race. The researchers found a “sizable positive association between football fandom and nation pride among whites” but a negative association among Black fans, which suggests that “the football spectacle may facilitate a more favorable national sentiment among white fans.” These findings reveal that a “hegemonic narrative of American national identity” incorporated into American football inevitably reproduces a hegemonic, or racially colorblind, form of patriotism that is adopted and internalized by

---

<sup>122</sup> Frohnen, “Patriotism of a Conservative,” p. 106.

<sup>123</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, “New Low of 52% ‘Extremely Proud’ to Be Americans,” *Gallup News*, July 1, 2016, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/193379/new-low-extremely-proud-americans.aspx>.

<sup>124</sup> Sorek and White, “American Football.”

<sup>125</sup> Tom E. Curran, “NFL Teams Being On the Field for Anthem Is a Relatively New Practice,” *NBC Sports*, August 29, 2016, <http://www.nbcsports.com/boston/new-england-patriots/nfl-teams-being-field-anthem-relatively-new-practice>.

fans. A perceived contradiction to this type of patriotism, then, is classified as un-American.

Tomi Lahren's description of the Super Bowl highlights the colorblind patriotism perfectly: She says the event brings "Americans of every color" together, invites "black fans [to] cheer next to white fans" and involves "teammates [who] work together as one, regardless of race."<sup>126</sup> Rush Limbaugh similarly emphasizes the "traditional pro-America, patriotic, out-of-this-world pregame show" before criticizing the halftime show that, according to him, involved "an entirely different portrayal, an exhibition, if you will, of American culture."<sup>127</sup> Both Lahren's and Limbaugh's condemnation of Beyoncé's performance reveal an unstated assumption that her exhibition of American culture is unacceptable, supporting Sorek and White's prediction that "a sense of black collective pride experienced in the sphere of American football might be translated into aversion to American national pride."<sup>128</sup> This translated aversion involves another unstated premise: Within the colorblind, patriotic realm of the Super Bowl, drawing attention to race or racism is divisive and, therefore, un-American. This assumption is present in Lahren's conclusion that Beyoncé is perpetuating "the great battle of the races" and "ripping off the historical Band-Aid,"<sup>129</sup> as well as Michelle Malkin's tweet about the divisiveness of Beyoncé "shaking her ass and shouting Negro repeatedly."<sup>130</sup> Conservative media

---

<sup>126</sup> Lahren, "Beyonce and the Black Panthers."

<sup>127</sup> "Limbaugh: Super Bowl Halftime Show Represented The 'Social Rot' Befalling the US, Looked Like a 'Different Country,'" *Media Matters for America*, February 8, 2016, <https://www.mediamatters.org/video/2016/02/08/limbaugh-super-bowl-halftime-show-represented-t/208438>.

<sup>128</sup> Sorek and White, "American Football."

<sup>129</sup> Lahren, "Beyonce and the Black Panthers."

responses that wield racial colorblindness as a tool to categorize Beyoncé's incorporation of Black liberation as divisive and race-baiting consequently categorize the performance as un-American, ultimately revealing a connection between conservatism and colorblind racism.

Exemplified most by the statement "I don't see color," racial colorblindness is heavily based upon the misappropriation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous line about his children living in "a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." The distortion of Dr. King's vision not only oversimplifies his views and omits his radical assertions about race<sup>131</sup> but has allowed conservatives to reclaim his legacy by arguing that his "message of self-help, patriotism and a colorblind America" were "fundamentally conservative" principles.<sup>132</sup> Though adopting colorblindness allows conservatives "to define themselves as politically progressive and racially tolerant,"<sup>133</sup> it instead provides the foundation of colorblind racism, or "the set of ideologies and discourses that uphold contemporary racial inequality by denying either its presence or its significance."<sup>134</sup> Just as law and order as a means for racial oppression is veiled by an undying respect for police, colorblindness

---

<sup>130</sup> Perez, "Beyonce Honors Black Panther."

<sup>131</sup> Ronald Turner, "The Dangers of Misappropriation: Misusing Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Legacy to Prove the Colorblind Thesis," *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 101.

<sup>132</sup> John Blake, "Why Conservatives Call MLK Their Hero," *CNN*, January 19, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/19/us/mlk-conservative/index.html>

<sup>133</sup> Charles A. Gallagher, "Color-Blind Privilege: The Social and Political Functions of Erasing the Color Line in Post-Race America," *Race, Gender & Class* 10, no. 4 (2003): 22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41675099>.

<sup>134</sup> Meghan A. Burke, "Colorblind Racism: Identities, Ideologies, and Shifting Subjectivities," *Sociological Perspectives* 60, no. 5 (October 2017): 857-865, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0731121417723827>

within conservatism functions to suppress of people of color under the façade of racial tolerance. For example, it has been deployed by conservatives “as a shorthand for opposition to affirmative action” to essentially propose that the “government should never take race into account, not even as a way to promote racial equality.”<sup>135</sup>

Maintaining that opposition to civil rights legislation is “strictly driven by a principled consideration of fairness...and the goal of establishing a truly color-blind society”<sup>136</sup> and not by racism fosters the concealed oppressive nature of colorblindness within conservatism. Condemning Beyoncé’s performance as un-American within this realm, then, reveals the unstated premises of colorblind racism within conservatism that serve to suppress any discussions about race – especially the ones that advocate for racial justice.

Colorblindness similarly functions as oppression within the NFL. The overrepresentation of Black athletes in football, for example, fuels a post-racial narrative but does not speak to the extreme lack of Black CEOs, presidents and coaches, nor to the ability of white fans to “simultaneously cheer for black players on the field and employ exclusionary practices toward blacks as fans.”<sup>137</sup> The majority of fans’ acceptance of a Black player, however, is nuanced by behavior they consider appropriate: Carolina Panthers quarterback Cam Newton, hailed as one of the most “unapologetically black” athletes in the NFL, is a polarizing figure because of it. As NFL analyst Ryan Clark described, “He’s disliked because, culturally, he’s hard to understand for most

---

<sup>135</sup> Ian Haney-Lopez, “How Conservatives Hijacked ‘Colorblindness’ and Set Civil Rights Back Decades,” *Salon*, January 20, 2014, [https://www.salon.com/2014/01/20/how\\_conservatives\\_hijacked\\_colorblindness\\_and\\_set\\_civil\\_rights\\_back\\_decades/](https://www.salon.com/2014/01/20/how_conservatives_hijacked_colorblindness_and_set_civil_rights_back_decades/).

<sup>136</sup> Jim Sidanius, Felicia Pratto and Lawrence Bobo, “Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 3 (March 1996): 476-490.

<sup>137</sup> Sorek and White, “American Football.”

people...So for the Caucasian fan...Cam Newton's culture is too young (and) hip hop, too young (and) brown."<sup>138</sup> Conservatives and white fans who deploy colorblind racism to attack expressions of Blackness, be it Newton's dabbing in the end zone or Beyoncé's love for "baby hair and afros," are sternly setting the boundaries for which American identities are acceptable and appropriate. The unstated premises that demonize expressions of Blackness or messages of Black liberation within conservatism and the NFL work to "preserve the inherited and accumulated privileges and power associated with whiteness."<sup>139</sup> This ultimately reveals a connection between conservatism, whiteness and racism.

### **Conservatism, Whiteness and Racism**

Modern conservatism, as is manifested in the Republican Party in the United States, began its linkage to whiteness and racism in the 1960s when white southern Democrats began to leave their party after President John F. Kennedy's platform of racial equality gained momentum. Despite some Republicans' retroactive insistence that white Southerners did not leave the Democratic party because of racial bias, an analysis of archival polls revealed that "The only explanation for their desertion of the Democratic Party that was consistent with the data was racial animosity and opposition to civil rights." *The Washington Post* states that this desertion allowed for a Republican opportunity:

---

<sup>138</sup> Joshua Adams, "People Dislike Cam Newton Because He's Black AND Dances," *The Huffington Post*, January 29, 2016, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-adams/people-dont-like-cam-newton-because-hes-black-and-dances\\_b\\_9103324.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-adams/people-dont-like-cam-newton-because-hes-black-and-dances_b_9103324.html).

<sup>139</sup> Albert Y. Bimper, Jr., "Lifting the Veil: Exploring Colorblind Racism in Black Student Athlete Experiences," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 39, no. 3 (February 2014): 225-243, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0193723513520013>.

By emphasizing their support for ‘states’ rights’ and ‘law and order,’ they could subtly appeal to those disaffected white voters, showing their support for the status quo without explicitly opposing civil rights. “Substantial numbers of Party leaders from both North and South see rich political dividends flowing from the Negrophobia of many white Americans,” wrote journalists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, both well sourced in conservative circles, two weeks after Kennedy’s speech. “These Republicans want to unmistakably establish the Party of Lincoln as the white man’s party.”<sup>140</sup>

Since then, Republicans have had difficulty shaking the label, partly due to its unwavering demographics: As of 2012, 89 percent of self-identified Republicans were white while just two percent were black,<sup>141</sup> and last year, non-Hispanic white men accounted for 87 percent of House Republicans.<sup>142</sup> This same whiteness dominates both the National Football League’s audience and leadership positions. In 2013, whites accounted for almost 80 percent of the fan base;<sup>143</sup> 88 percent of head coaches, 97 percent of majority owners and 72 percent of league office staff were all white, despite white players accounting for only 30 percent of the league.<sup>144</sup> The overwhelming whiteness of conservatism and the NFL, combined with an adoption of colorblindness, absolves these

---

<sup>140</sup> Max Ehrenfreund, “What Social Science Tells Us About Racism in The Republican Party,” *The Washington Post*, December 11, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/11/what-social-science-tells-us-about-racism-in-the-republican-party/?utm\\_term=.6164ad881eb1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/11/what-social-science-tells-us-about-racism-in-the-republican-party/?utm_term=.6164ad881eb1).

<sup>141</sup> Frank Newport, “Democrats Racially Diverse; Republicans Mostly White,” *Gallup News*, February 8, 2013, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/160373/democrats-racially-diverse-republicans-mostly-white.aspx>.

<sup>142</sup> David Wasserman, “House Democrats Are Getting More Diverse. Republicans Aren’t,” *FiveThirtyEight*, November 6, 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/house-democrats-are-getting-more-diverse-republicans-arent/>.

<sup>143</sup> “Distribution of NFL television audience during 2013 regular season, by race/ethnicity,” *Statista*, February 2014, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/289952/distribution-of-nfl-regular-season-tv-audience-by-race-or-ethnicity/>.

<sup>144</sup> Mona Chalabi, “Three Leagues, 92 Teams and One Black Principal Owner,” *FiveThirtyEight*, April 28, 2014, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/diversity-in-the-nba-the-nfl-and-mlb/>.

entities of a responsibility to address racial disparities and thus disinclines criticisms of such inequalities.

It cannot be Blackness in general that is unwelcome within the NFL, given the overrepresentation of Black athletes or the considerable percentage of performers of color throughout the Super Bowl halftime show's history,<sup>145</sup> nor can it be that conservative media responses rejected Beyoncé's performance simply because she is Black. Because white conservatism is concerned with maintaining a social hierarchy and status quo,<sup>146</sup> however, Robert Smith explains how it inevitably and directly benefits from systemic and institutional racism:

This 'systemic racism' is reflected historically in the unjustly gained economic resources and political power of whites; empirically in a complex array of anti-black practices; and in the ideology of white supremacy and the attitudes of whites that developed in order to rationalize the system.

This complex systemic phenomenon is what African American thought challenges and African American movements have sought to overthrow. Conservatives, however, have sought to maintain it or, at best, to change it gradually, always prioritizing stability over justice. This, then, historically and situationally, is what in the first instance makes conservatism and racism in America the same.<sup>147</sup>

Racial equality would upend the social hierarchy that white conservatism serves to maintain and explicitly reaps the rewards from, making the goals of Black liberation movements unreasonable at best and threatening at worst.

---

<sup>145</sup> "Who Has Performed at Super Bowl Halftime?" *Sports Illustrated*, February 3, 2017, <https://www.si.com/nfl/2017/02/05/super-bowl-halftime-performances>.

<sup>146</sup> Kerlinger, "Liberalism and Conservatism," 17.

<sup>147</sup> Robert C. Smith, "Defining the Terms of Discourse," *Conservatism and Racism, and Why in America They Are the Same* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 12-13.

Conservatism's acceptance and endorsement of institutional racism, then, is inevitably reproduced within the unstated premises of the conservative media's criticism of "Formation" at the Super Bowl. Classifying Black liberation movements and the performance as anti-police serves to suppress their goals of achieving racial justice by ignoring or justifying the systemic issue of racist police brutality and/or reinforcing the criminality of Blackness, hidden beneath demanding a respect for police. Labeling "Formation" as anti-American serves to perpetuate the hegemonic standard of American identity by deeming that exhibiting pride in Blackness is unacceptable, concealed by demanding a racially-transcendent atmosphere at the Super Bowl. It is these underlying premises that allow for conservative media responses to deploy their outrage over Beyoncé's message of black liberation and black pride in "Formation" without having to be explicitly racist. The next chapter discusses the salience of these enthymematic assumptions in the conservative media's parallel criticisms of Colin Kaepernick's protests, as well as conclusions from my research and analysis.

## | CHAPTER FOUR |

### CONCLUSION

My thematic analysis aimed to discover what themes emerged within both liberal and conservative media responses to “Formation” and to reveal if each type of source’s framing would produce divergent dimensions. The results supported my prediction that liberal sources would favor Beyoncé’s performance while conservative sources would reject it, thus upholding the theory of traditional media framing within a less formal context of mediated responses to a cultural moment like the Super Bowl halftime show. My enthymematic analysis aimed to explore what underlying assumptions within conservatism are ultimately reproduced within these responses; I concluded that conservatism’s respect for police and incarnation of patriotism, each connected to the ideology’s whiteness and racism, contributed to the conservative media’s condemnations of Beyoncé. The National Football League’s similarities to conservatism, such as the whiteness of those in power and endorsement of a colorblind patriotism, not only magnify the backlash to Beyoncé’s political statement but foreshadow similar reactions to a more recent protest from one of its players.

#### **Kaepernick, The NFL and Patriotism**

Six months after Beyoncé debuted “Formation” at Super Bowl 50, Colin Kaepernick, then a quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, garnered attention for sitting down during the playing of the national anthem in three NFL preseason games. After the third game, which sparked a national discussion, he explained to the NFL media why he opted out of standing: “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color... To me, this is bigger than football and

it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”<sup>148</sup> The 49ers released a statement shortly after reflecting on the anthem’s role in honoring the country while respecting Kaepernick’s right to choose not to participate in its celebration; the NFL similarly stated, “Players are encouraged but not required to stand during the playing of the national anthem.”<sup>149</sup>

In the ensuing months, players across the league, high school football teams and college marching bands began to kneel, turning Kaepernick’s protest into a national phenomenon.<sup>150</sup> Kaepernick was both praised and condemned in many circles – including being featured on the cover of *Time Magazine*<sup>151</sup> and having his jersey burned by numerous former fans.<sup>152</sup> Expectedly, conservative media responses contained dimensions and assumptions that paralleled those in the responses to “Formation.” Tomi Lahren, for example, reiterates her idea of colorblind patriotism by describing the national anthem and flag as symbols that represent “patriots of every race that have fought and died for this country” before asserting that the message he is sending to Black

---

<sup>148</sup> Mark Sandritter, “A Timeline of Colin Kaepernick’s Nation Anthem Protest and the Athletes Who Joined Him,” *SB Nation*, September 25, 2017, <https://www.sbnation.com/2016/9/11/12869726/colin-kaepernick-national-anthem-protest-seahawks-brandon-marshall-nfl>.

<sup>149</sup> Steve Wyche, “Colin Kaepernick Explains Why He Sat During National Anthem,” *NFL.com*, August 27, 2016, <http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000691077/article/colin-kaepernick-explains-protest-of-national-anthem>.

<sup>150</sup> Sandritter, “A Timeline.”

<sup>151</sup> Sean Gregory, “All Across the Country, Athletes Are Fueling a Debate About How America Defines Patriotism,” *Time*, September 22, 2016, <http://time.com/magazine/us/4503993/october-3rd-2016-vol-188-no-13-u-s/>.

<sup>152</sup> Cindy Boren, “Colin Kaepernick Protest Has 49ers Fans Burning Their Jerseys,” *The Washington Post*, August 28, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2016/08/28/colin-kaepernick-protest-has-49ers-fans-burning-their-jerseys/?utm\\_term=.c1027e0a89cd](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2016/08/28/colin-kaepernick-protest-has-49ers-fans-burning-their-jerseys/?utm_term=.c1027e0a89cd).

children is “to parade around with a chip on their shoulder like a victim.” Lahren also cites the Black homicide rate, including other issues in communities of color, when asking, “When will those in Black communities take a step back and take some responsibility for the problems in Black communities?”<sup>153</sup> After Kaepernick stated that he disagreed with the notion that his protest was un-American, *Breitbart* opened its response with the line, “If youth is wasted on the young, irony is also wasted on the ignorant.”<sup>154</sup> The most famous conservative response came a year later from Donald Trump, whose colorful language called upon NFL owners to fire any player who kneels during the anthem because it “disrespects our flag.”<sup>155</sup> Trump’s comments fueled an entirely new wave of support for Kaepernick, who was not playing at the time after opting out of his 49ers contract in March and, as of this writing, remains unsigned by a new team.<sup>156</sup> Players, coaches and even team owners who had once supported Trump’s campaign kneeled or stood with linked arms in solidarity.<sup>157</sup> Many conservative media responses, on the other hand, backed Trump’s views.<sup>158,159</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Lindsey Bruce, “Tomi Lahren DESTROYS Colin Kaepernick,” *The Blaze*, August 30, 2016, video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq0\\_nyWVXCI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq0_nyWVXCI).

<sup>154</sup> Dylan Gwinn, “Colin Kaepernick Says Nothing ‘Un-American’ About Kneeling for National Anthem,” *Breitbart News*, October 17, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/sports/2016/10/17/colin-kaepernick-says-nothing-un-american-kneeling-national-anthem/>.

<sup>155</sup> Bryan Armen Graham, “Donald Trump Blasts NFL Anthem Protestors: ‘Get That Son of a Bitch Off the Field,’” *The Guardian*, September 23, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/sep/22/donald-trump-nfl-national-anthem-protests>.

<sup>156</sup> Chris Biderman, “Colin Kaepernick Officially Opts Out of 49ers Contract,” *Niners Wire*, March 3, 2017, <http://ninerswire.usatoday.com/2017/03/03/report-colin-kaepernick-officially-opts-out>.

<sup>157</sup> “NFL Players, Coaches, Owners Lock Arms, Kneel During National Anthem,” *ESPN.com*, September 25, 2017, [http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/\\_/id/20800784/nfl-players-coaches-owners-kneel-lock-arms-national-anthem](http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/20800784/nfl-players-coaches-owners-kneel-lock-arms-national-anthem).

<sup>158</sup> John Hawkins, “Trump is Right About the NFL Protests,” *National Review*, September 26, 2017, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/451816/nfl-protests-trump-right>.

Comparing the arguments presented within conservative media responses to Beyoncé and Kaepernick shows a striking similarity in the interpretations of both as unqualified messengers. The “Beyoncé” theme in my thematic analysis first revealed that many conservative responses considered her to be too white to speak on issues within the Black community, which is reiterated within conservative criticism of Kaepernick; for example, Lahren states:

Colin, how dare you sit there and blame white people for the problems in minority communities. After all, aren't you half white? Didn't two white parents adopt you after yours weren't willing to raise you? For a racist and horrible country filled with racist and horrible white people, that's really something, isn't it?<sup>160</sup>

For Lahren and other conservative critics, Kaepernick's ties to whiteness apparently disqualify him as a credible voice for issues facing Black Americans, just as Beyoncé's history of alleged colorism disqualifies her. The irony, of course, lies in the fact that these conservatives claim to be racially colorblind. The “Beyoncé” theme in my analysis also indicated that conservative responses considered her too rich to be oppressed, which was also argued for Kaepernick; an op-ed in *The Blaze* titled “Dear Colin Kaepernick: You're Not Oppressed. You're Spoiled” argues that his salary and material possessions prove that he himself is not oppressed.<sup>161</sup> The underlying assumption is twofold: Not only must one be oppressed to fight oppression, but that wealth automatically negates oppression.

---

<sup>159</sup> “‘Shame on All of You’: Judge Jeanine Blasts Goodell, Anti-Trump Players,” *Fox News Insider*, September 24, 2017, <http://insider.foxnews.com/2017/09/24/judge-jeanine-rips-nfl-roger-goodell-national-anthem-kneelers-after-trump-speech>.

<sup>160</sup> Bruce, “Tomi Lahren.”

<sup>161</sup> Matt Walsh, “Dear Colin Kaepernick: You're Not Oppressed. You're Spoiled,” *The Blaze*, August 29, 2016, <http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/dear-colin-kaepernick-youre-not-oppressed-youre-spoiled>.

In addition to perceiving Kaepernick as unqualified to speak to the oppression of people of color, his explicitness of his message fueled a more direct denial of that oppression. A piece on *Fox Nation*, the online conservative opinion extension of *Fox News*, explains how Kaepernick's protest is unfounded:

Apparently, Mr. Kaepernick is not aware that you cannot protest a problem that does not exist. You also cannot protest a problem that can never be solved because it only exists as the creation of those who want it to exist. The perception of oppression and inequality will always exist in a free society. But pointing to isolated incidents of police violence as an example of state-sanctioned oppression of minorities is absurd, to say the least.<sup>162</sup>

Beyoncé's somewhat indirect message of condemning oppression and police violence against people of color ignited unstated assumptions within conservatism that denies this oppression; Kaepernick's message brings these assumptions to the surface. Similarly, Kaepernick's method of protesting during the national anthem, where kneeling is considered by his critics to be disrespectful to the country and the military, also fueled a more overt condemnation of him as un-American. The argument is often tied to the meritocratic opportunities that America – and the NFL – provide, exemplified by statements like “[Kaepernick has] nothing but disdain for the country that gave [him] everything and for the people who made it possible.”<sup>163</sup> Categorizing Beyoncé as un-American involved the unstated assumptions within conservatism to refuse to address race at a colorblind, patriotic setting like the Super Bowl; drawing direct attention to racial oppression in America during its anthem unveils these assumptions more clearly.

---

<sup>162</sup> Joe Bilello, “Musings of an Average Joe: NFL Coward Kaepernick Should Have Taken a Stand On Something That's Not So 'Safe,’” *Fox Nation*, September 11, 2016, <http://nation.foxnews.com/2016/09/11/musings-average-joe-nfl-coward-kaepernick-should-have-taken-stand-something-thats-not-so>.

<sup>163</sup> Walsh, “Dear Colin Kaepernick.”

The explicitness in Kaepernick's message, its backlash and the tangible consequences he has faced as a result, reveal the same underlying racism behind the negative response to Beyoncé's performance. Though he landed a million-dollar book deal<sup>164</sup> and has been named *GQ*'s Citizen of the Year,<sup>165</sup> he came close to being dropped by the 49ers had he not opted out of his contract and remains unemployed is a result of his protest.<sup>166</sup> Beyoncé, however, was virtually unaffected by her criticism: Despite the conservative criticism and some police unions refusing to provide security at her tour,<sup>167</sup> the roughly \$250 million profit from The Formation World Tour<sup>168</sup> contributed to her status as the richest woman in music this year.<sup>169</sup> It goes without saying that Kaepernick was not nearly at the level of fame Beyoncé had acquired over her 20-year career and that her status is indeed a part of why the conservative media's condemnation of her had essentially minimal consequences. Additionally, Kaepernick was protesting within his (literal) field of work, which cost him his job; Beyoncé has plenty of other arenas outside the NFL to make a noteworthy statement. Regardless of these differences, it is impossible

---

<sup>164</sup> Ian Mohr, "Colin Kaepernick Lands Million-Dollar Book Deal," *Page Six*, October 24, 2017, <https://pagesix.com/2017/10/24/colin-kaepernick-lands-million-dollar-book-deal/>.

<sup>165</sup> "Colin Kaepernick Will Not Be Silenced," *GQ*, November 13, 2017, <https://www.gq.com/story/colin-kaepernick-will-not-be-silenced>.

<sup>166</sup> Sheil Kapadia, "Richard Sherman Believes Colin Kaepernick Being Treated Unfairly," *ESPN.com*, March 24, 2017, [http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/\\_/id/18994463/richard-sherman-seattle-seahawks-thinks-colin-kaepernick-being-blackballed](http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/18994463/richard-sherman-seattle-seahawks-thinks-colin-kaepernick-being-blackballed).

<sup>167</sup> Niraj Chokshi, "Boycott Beyoncé's 'Formation' Tour, Police Union Urges," *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/02/19/boycott-beyonces-formation-world-tour-police-union-urges/?utm\\_term=.1d3fe5a391b8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/02/19/boycott-beyonces-formation-world-tour-police-union-urges/?utm_term=.1d3fe5a391b8).

<sup>168</sup> Randy Lewis, "Bruce Springsteen, Beyoncé Post Top-Grossing Tours of 2016," *The Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/sdhoy-bruce-springsteen-beyonce-post-top-grossing-tours-of-2016-20161229-story.html>.

<sup>169</sup> Zack O'Malley Greenburg, "The World's Highest-Paid Women in Music 2017," *Forbes*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackomalleygreenburg/2017/11/20/the-worlds-highest-paid-women-in-music-2017/#777568c4e15a>.

to ignore the similarities in backlash to both situations within conservative media. Both reveal the same subtle and overt elements of conservatism that label messages and messengers of Black liberation unacceptable, especially within American football.

### **Conclusion**

The conservative principles and assumptions that I have uncovered in media responses to Beyoncé and Kaepernick can extend beyond the realm of sports and entertainment. The conservative media's perpetuation of the narrative that Black Lives Matter is anti-police, for example, helps justify the FBI's classification of it as a domestic terrorist group. The conservative media's perpetuation of a hegemonic national identity not only excludes the American identities of people of color but emphasizes and emboldens whiteness, as is reflected by the President's and media's attacks on Black athletes like Kaepernick alongside a refusal to condemn white supremacy.<sup>170</sup> Though this President often makes mockery of the politically divided media, its divergence in framing is highlighted by the responses to "Formation." My analysis revealed that conservative and liberal media responses held extremely different opinions and assumptions about the performance; if the case for echo chambers rings true, as I believe it does, it means that conservative and liberal media consumers are being told two entirely different sides of the same stories. It is unlikely that the ideological divide within the media can remedy the ideological divide within its consumer audience; therefore, it is necessary to examine the discrepancies in media responses, as I have done, to understand fully the scope of its framing.

---

<sup>170</sup> Derek Thompson, "Donald Trump and the Politicization of Everything," *The Atlantic*, September 23, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/09/donald-trump-and-the-politicization-of-everything/540915/>.

This analysis has also upheld an unfortunately consistent resistance to Black liberation movements. Protests occur to challenge the status quo while those who favor the status quo are inevitably resistant; resistance to people of color who challenge the status quo specifically functions as oppression. This is why police attacked activists by spraying them with fire hoses, beating them with wands and chasing them with dogs during the Civil Rights Movement,<sup>171</sup> and why Tommie Smith and John Carlos were expelled for raising their fists when receiving their medals at the 1968 Olympic Games.<sup>172</sup> Conservatives are not the only ones who condemn Black protest, nor is the conservative media the only outlet that frames it negatively; within this sample, however, conservatism and its assumptions are the forces behind the rejection of Black liberation. The whiteness and racism of conservatism foster countless reasons to oppose Black resistance, but the underlying premises of the media's arguments allow it to be disguised as outrage over attacks on police or the military. Whether marching on the street, raising fists on the field or kneeling on the sideline, people of color demanding change will always be a threat to the status quo for those who hold it dear.

Impartial as it may be, the media has a duty to reflect these situations of resistance and can function as a crucial purveyor of change. It was not until the images of violence inflicted upon Black protestors in Birmingham were broadcast to the entire country, revealing an ugly truth about the Civil Rights Movement, that pressured the city to start the process of desegregation.<sup>173</sup> It was not until a photo of Kaepernick sitting at that third

---

<sup>171</sup> Corky Siemaszko, "Birmingham Erupted into Chaos in 1963 as Battle for Civil Rights Exploded in South," *New York Daily News*, May 3, 2012, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/birmingham-erupted-chaos-1963-battle-civil-rights-exploded-south-article-1.1071793>.

<sup>172</sup> Montanaro, "Trump, The NFL."

game made its rounds on the Internet, eventually sparking a national movement, that accomplished exactly what it was meant to do: Create a national dialogue about race and police violence “in such a way that reporters, fans and team owners [would] actually pay attention.”<sup>174</sup> His message would also go on to influence the 49ers to donate \$1 million to charities that focus on racial issues and allow him to donate some of the proceeds from his now best-selling jersey sales to the same causes.<sup>175</sup> And it was not until Beyoncé brought “Formation” to the largest televised platform in America that many people saw her as an activist for racial equality – or, in other words, saw February 7, 2016 as “The Day Beyoncé Turned Black.” The divided mediated interpretations of Black liberation ultimately initiate conversations about race that the public needs to have. Though the media may perpetuate an ideological divide, it also requires its consumers to face this divide at times they may not prefer, like the Super Bowl halftime show. In times of great political divide and tension, it is crucial to have these media-driven conversations and to engage with dissenting opinions; without them, consumers are stuck within their echo chambers and living a one-sided version of history.

---

<sup>173</sup> Siemaszko, “Birmingham Erupted.”

<sup>174</sup> Josh Levin, “Colin Kaepernick’s Protest is Working,” *Slate*, September 12, 2016, [http://www.slate.com/articles/sports/sports\\_nut/2016/09/colin\\_kaepernick\\_s\\_protest\\_is\\_working.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/sports/sports_nut/2016/09/colin_kaepernick_s_protest_is_working.html).

<sup>175</sup> Dan Loumena, “49ers to Donate \$1 Million to Charities That Focus on Racial Issues Cited by Colin Kaepernick,” *The Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/sports/nfl/la-sp-colin-kaepernick-49ers-donation-20160908-snap-story.html>.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, Joshua. "People Dislike Cam Newton Because He's Black AND Dances." *The Huffington Post*, January 29, 2016. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-adams/people-dont-like-cam-newton-because-hes-black-and-dances\\_b\\_9103324.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-adams/people-dont-like-cam-newton-because-hes-black-and-dances_b_9103324.html).
- "AllSides Bias Ratings." *AllSides*, 2017. <https://www.allsides.com/bias/bias-ratings>.
- Battan, Carrie. "Beyoncé Sacks the Super Bowl Halftime Show." *The New Yorker*, February 8, 2016. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/beyonce-sacks-the-super-bowl-halftime-show>.
- Bellware, Kim. "Sean Hannity Draws Comparison Between Black Lives Matter and KKK." *The Huffington Post*, October 22, 2015. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/sean-hannity-black-lives-matter-kkk\\_us\\_5628ff2ee4b0ec0a38936571](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/sean-hannity-black-lives-matter-kkk_us_5628ff2ee4b0ec0a38936571).
- "Beyoncé's Super Bowl Performance: Why Was It So Significant?" *BBC News*, February 8, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-35520636>.
- "Beyoncé's Super Bowl Show Brings Praise and Criticism." *CBS News*, February 9, 2016. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/beyonces-super-bowl-show-brings-praise-and-criticism/>.
- Biderman, Chris. "Colin Kaepernick Officially Opt's Out of 49ers Contract." *Niners Wire*, March 3, 2017. <http://ninerswire.usatoday.com/2017/03/03/report-colin-kaepernick-officially-opts-out-of-49ers-contract/>.
- Bilello, Joe. "Musings of an Average Joe: NFL Coward Kaepernick Should Have Taken a Stand On Something That's Not So 'Safe.'" *Fox Nation*, September 11, 2016. <http://nation.foxnews.com/2016/09/11/musings-average-joe-nfl-coward-kaepernick-should-have-taken-stand-something-thats-not-so>.
- Bimper, Jr., Albert Y. "Lifting the Veil: Exploring Colorblind Racism in Black Student Athlete Experiences." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 39, no. 3 (February 2014): 225-243. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0193723513520013>.
- Binion, Billy. "Breitbart: Right-Wing Publication or Fake News?" *AllSides*, July 28, 2017. <https://www.allsides.com/blog/breitbart-right-wing-publication-or-fake-news>.
- Bitzer, Lloyd F. "Aristotle's Enthymeme Revisited." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 45, no. 4 (1959): 399-408.

- Blake, John. "Why Conservatives Call MLK Their Hero." *CNN*, January 19, 2013. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/19/us/mlk-conservative/index.html>
- Boren, Cindy. "Colin Kaepernick Protest Has 49ers Fans Burning Their Jerseys." *The Washington Post*, August 28, 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2016/08/28/colin-kaepernick-protest-has-49ers-fans-burning-their-jerseys/?utm\\_term=.c1027e0a89cd](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2016/08/28/colin-kaepernick-protest-has-49ers-fans-burning-their-jerseys/?utm_term=.c1027e0a89cd).
- Bowen, Glenn A. "Naturalistic Inquiry and the Saturation Concept: A Research Note." *Qualitative Research* 8, no. 1 (February 2008): 137-152. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1468794107085301>
- Braun, Virginia and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 1-42.
- Brown, Anna. "Republicans More Likely Than Democrats to Have Confidence in Police." *Pew Research Center*, January 13, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/13/republicans-more-likely-than-democrats-to-have-confidence-in-police/>.
- Bruce, Lindsey. "Tomi Lahren DESTROYS Colin Kaepernick." *The Blaze*. August 30, 2016. Video. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq0\\_nyWVXCI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq0_nyWVXCI).
- Burke, Meghan A. "Colorblind Racism: Identities, Ideologies, and Shifting Subjectivities." *Sociological Perspectives* 60, no. 5 (October 2017): 857-865. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0731121417723827>
- Caramanica, Jon, Wesley Morris and Jenna Wortham. "Beyoncé in 'Formation': Entertainer, Activist, Both?" *The New York Times*, February 6, 2016. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/arts/music/beyonce-formation-super-bowl-video.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/arts/music/beyonce-formation-super-bowl-video.html?_r=0).
- Chalabi, Mona. "Three Leagues, 92 Teams and One Black Principal Owner." *FiveThirtyEight*, April 28, 2014. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/diversity-in-the-nba-the-nfl-and-mlb/>.
- Chan, Melissa. "Rudy Giuliani says 'Black Lives Matter' is 'Inherently Racist.'" *Time*, July 10, 2016. <http://time.com/4400259/rudy-giuliani-black-lives-matter/>.
- Chokshi, Niraj, "Boycott Beyoncé's 'Formation' Tour, Police Union Urges." *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/02/19/boycott-beyonces-formation-world-tour-police-union-urges/?utm\\_term=.1d3fe5a391b8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/02/19/boycott-beyonces-formation-world-tour-police-union-urges/?utm_term=.1d3fe5a391b8).
- "Colin Kaepernick Will Not Be Silenced." *GQ*, November 13, 2017. <https://www.gq.com/story/colin-kaepernick-will-not-be-silenced>.

- Collins, Kaitlan. "Rep. King Bashes Beyonce's Super Bowl Performance: It Was 'Pro-Black Panther and Anti-Cop.'" *The Daily Caller*, February 8, 2016. <http://dailycaller.com/2016/02/08/rep-king-bashes-beyonces-super-bowl-performance-it-was-pro-black-panther-and-anti-cop/>.
- Curran, Tom E. "NFL Teams Being On the Field for Anthem Is a Relatively New Practice." *NBC Sports*, August 29, 2016. <http://www.nbcsports.com/boston/new-england-patriots/nfl-teams-being-field-anthem-relatively-new-practice>.
- "Distribution of NFL television audience during 2013 regular season, by race/ethnicity." *Statista*, February 2014. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/289952/distribution-of-nfl-regular-season-tv-audience-by-race-or-ethnicity/>.
- Ehrenfreund, Max. "What Social Science Tells Us About Racism in The Republican Party." *The Washington Post*, December 11, 2015. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/11/what-social-science-tells-us-about-racism-in-the-republican-party/?utm\\_term=.6164ad881eb1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/11/what-social-science-tells-us-about-racism-in-the-republican-party/?utm_term=.6164ad881eb1).
- Elgot, Jessica. "Beyoncé Unleashes Black Panthers Homage at Super Bowl 50." *The Guardian*, February 8, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/08/beyonce-black-panthers-homage-black-lives-matter-super-bowl-50>.
- "Fox & Friends Attacks Beyonce's Super Bowl Performance." *Raw Story*, February 8, 2016. Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqnvVVsWamI>.
- Frohnen, Bruce P. "The Patriotism of a Conservative." *Modern Age* 48, no. 2 (2006): 105-118.
- Gallagher, Charles A. "Color-Blind Privilege: The Social and Political Functions of Erasing the Color Line in Post-Race America." *Race, Gender & Class* 10, no. 4 (2003): 22-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41675099>.
- Graham, Bryan Armen. "Donald Trump Blasts NFL Anthem Protestors: 'Get That Son of a Bitch Off the Field.'" *The Guardian*, September 23, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/sep/22/donald-trump-nfl-national-anthem-protests>.
- Greenburg, Zack O'Malley, "The World's Highest-Paid Women in Music 2017," *Forbes*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackomalleygreenburg/2017/11/20/the-worlds-highest-paid-women-in-music-2017/#777568c4e15a>.
- Gregory, Sean. "All Across the Country, Athletes Are Fueling a Debate About How America Defines Patriotism." *Time*, September 22, 2016. <http://time.com/magazine/us/4503993/october-3rd-2016-vol-188-no-13-u-s/>.

- Gwinn, Dylan. "Colin Kaepernick Says Nothing 'Un-American' About Kneeling for National Anthem." *Breitbart News*, October 17, 2016. <http://www.breitbart.com/sports/2016/10/17/colin-kaepernick-says-nothing-un-american-kneeling-national-anthem/>.
- Haney-Lopez, Ian. "How Conservatives Hijacked 'Colorblindness' and Set Civil Rights Back Decades." *Salon*, January 20, 2014. [https://www.salon.com/2014/01/20/how\\_conservatives\\_hijacked\\_colorblindness\\_and\\_set\\_civil\\_rights\\_back\\_decades/](https://www.salon.com/2014/01/20/how_conservatives_hijacked_colorblindness_and_set_civil_rights_back_decades/).
- Hansen, Dale. "Response to Beyoncé Shows How Far We Still Have to Go." *The Huffington Post*, February 23, 2016. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-hansen/response-to-beyonce-shows\\_b\\_9300448.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-hansen/response-to-beyonce-shows_b_9300448.html).
- Hanson, Hillary. "#BlackLivesMatter Condemns NYPD Cop Killings: 'Not Our Vision of Justice.'" *The Huffington Post*, December 21, 2014. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/21/nypd-cop-killings-blacklivesmatter\\_n\\_6362400.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/21/nypd-cop-killings-blacklivesmatter_n_6362400.html).
- Haskins, Justin. "Top 100 Conservative Websites, February 2016 Edition." *The New Revere*, February 24, 2016. <http://thenewrevere.com/2016/02/the-top-100-conservative-websites-february-2016-edition/>.
- Hawkins, John. "Trump is Right About the NFL Protests." *National Review*, September 26, 2017. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/451816/nfl-protests-trump-right>.
- Hooton, Christopher. "Social Media Echo Chambers Gifted Donald Trump the Presidency." *The Independent*, November 10, 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/donald-trump-president-social-media-echo-chamber-hypernormalisation-adam-curtis-protests-blame-a7409481.html>.
- "How Breitbart Became Donald Trump's Favourite News Site." *BBC News*, November 14, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37109970>.
- Howard, Adam. "Beyoncé Delivers Politically Charged Super Bowl Halftime Performance." *MSNBC*, February 8, 2016. <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/beyonce-delivers-politically-charged-super-bowl-halftime-performance>.
- Jamieson, Kathleen H. and Joseph N. Cappella. *Echo chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the conservative media establishment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Jeffries, Judson L. and Ryan Nissim-Sabat. *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities Across America*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.
- Johnson, Jenna and Mary Jordan. "Trump on Rally Protestor: 'Maybe He Should Have Been Roughed Up.'" *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/22/black->

activist-punched-at-donald-trump-rally-in-birmingham/?utm\_term=.d84662f5ac2c.

Jones, Jeffrey M. "New Low of 52% 'Extremely Proud' to Be Americans." *Gallup News*, July 1, 2016. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/193379/new-low-extremely-proud-americans.aspx>.

Kapadia, Sheil. "Richard Sherman Believes Colin Kaepernick Being Treated Unfairly." *ESPN.com*, March 24, 2017. [http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/\\_/id/18994463/richard-sherman-seattle-seahawks-thinks-colin-kaepernick-being-blackballed](http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/18994463/richard-sherman-seattle-seahawks-thinks-colin-kaepernick-being-blackballed).

Karimi, Faith. "Dallas Sniper Attack: 5 Officers Killed, Suspect Identified." *CNN*, July 9, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/08/us/philando-castile-alton-sterling-protests/index.html>.

Kerlinger, Fred N. *Liberalism and Conservatism: The Nature and Structure of Social Attitudes*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1984.

King, Jamilah. "Mario Woods, Slain Man Beyoncé's Dancers Honored at Super Bowl, Had 21 Gunshot Wounds." *Mic*, February 12, 2016. <https://mic.com/articles/135167/mario-woods-slain-man-beyonc-s-dancers-honored-at-super-bowl-had-21-gunshot-wounds#.jlg7S9m6i>.

Kuypers, Jim. "Understanding Media Manipulation of Controversial Issues." *Press Bias and Politics: How The Media Frame Controversial Issues*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002.

Lahren, Tomi. "Beyonce and the Black Panthers | Final Thoughts with Tomi Lahren." *The Blaze*, February 11, 2016. Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2O5MGpfKTc>.

Lennard, Natasha. "Why Are Cops Taking Beyoncé's Black Affirmation as an Attack?" *Al Jazeera America*, February 9, 2016. <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/2/why-are-cops-taking-beyonces-affirmation-of-black-strength-as-an-attack.html>.

Leonard, Tom. "Queen of Cynicism: No Stunt Too Shameless for Beyoncé, Who Was Once Accused of Trying to Look White but This Week Posed as a Heroine of Black Power." *The Daily Mail*, February 12, 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3445116/Queen-cynicism-No-stunt-s-shameless-Beyonce-accused-trying-look-white-week-posed-heroine-black-power.html>.

Leung, Lawrence. "Validity, Reliability and Generalizability in Qualitative Research." *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 4, no. 3 (2015): 324-327.

- Levin, Josh. "Colin Kaepernick's Protest is Working." *Slate*, September 12, 2016. [http://www.slate.com/articles/sports/sports\\_nut/2016/09/colin\\_kaepernick\\_s\\_prot\\_est\\_is\\_working.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/sports/sports_nut/2016/09/colin_kaepernick_s_prot_est_is_working.html).
- Lewis, Randy, "Bruce Springsteen, Beyoncé Post Top-Grossing Tours of 2016." *The Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 2016. <http://www.latimes.com/sdhoy-bruce-springsteen-beyonce-post-top-grossing-tours-of-2016-20161229-story.html>.
- "Limbaugh: Super Bowl Halftime Show Represented The 'Social Rot' Befalling the US, Looked Like a 'Different Country.'" *Media Matters for America*, February 8, 2016. <https://www.mediamatters.org/video/2016/02/08/limbaugh-super-bowl-halftime-show-represented-t/208438>.
- Loumena, Dan. "49ers to Donate \$1 Million to Charities That Focus on Racial Issues Cited by Colin Kaepernick." *The Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 2016. <http://www.latimes.com/sports/nfl/la-sp-colin-kaepernick-49ers-donation-20160908-snap-story.html>.
- Matthews, Shanelle and Malkia Cyril. "We Say Black Lives Matter. The FBI Says That Makes Us a Security Threat." *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/10/19/we-say-black-lives-matter-the-fbi-says-that-makes-us-a-security-threat/?tid=hybrid\\_collaborative\\_3\\_na&utm\\_term=.42b9d5835e65](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/10/19/we-say-black-lives-matter-the-fbi-says-that-makes-us-a-security-threat/?tid=hybrid_collaborative_3_na&utm_term=.42b9d5835e65).
- "Media bias rating methods." *AllSides*, 2017. <https://www.allsides.com/bias/media-bias-rating-methods>.
- Mitchell, Amy, Jeffrey Gottfried, Jocelyn Kiley and Katerina Matsa. "Political Polarization & Media Habits." *Pew Research Center*, October 21, 2014. <http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>.
- Mohr, Ian. "Colin Kaepernick Lands Million-Dollar Book Deal." *Page Six*, October 24, 2017. <https://pagesix.com/2017/10/24/colin-kaepernick-lands-million-dollar-book-deal/>.
- Montanaro, Domenico. "Trump, The NFL and The Powder Keg History of Race, Sports and Politics." *NPR*, September 25, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/2017/09/25/553478047/trump-the-nfl-and-the-powder-keg-history-of-race-sports-and-politics>.
- Mueller, Benjamin and Al Baker. "2 N.Y.P.D. Officers Killed in Brooklyn Ambush; Suspect Commits Suicide," *The New York Times*. December 20, 2014 [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/two-police-officers-shot-in-their-patrol-car-in-brooklyn.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/nyregion/two-police-officers-shot-in-their-patrol-car-in-brooklyn.html?_r=1)
- Newport, Frank. "Democrats Racially Diverse; Republicans Mostly White." *Gallup News*, February 8, 2013. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/160373/democrats-racially-diverse-republicans-mostly-white.aspx>.

- “NFL Players, Coaches, Owners Lock Arms, Kneel During National Anthem.” *ESPN.com*, September 25, 2017.  
[http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/\\_/id/20800784/nfl-players-coaches-owners-kneel-lock-arms-national-anthem](http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/20800784/nfl-players-coaches-owners-kneel-lock-arms-national-anthem).
- O’Brien, Cortney. “After Getting Police Escort, Beyonce Spews Black Lives Matter Message At Super Bowl.” *Townhall*, February 8, 2016.  
<https://townhall.com/tipsheet/cortneyobrien/2016/02/08/after-getting-police-escort-beyonce-spews-black-lives-matter-message-at-super-bowl-n2116455>.
- Owen, William Foster. “Interpretive Themes in Relational Communication.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70, no. 3 (1984): 274-287.
- Pallotta, Frank and Brian Stelter. “Super Bowl 50 Audience is Third Largest in TV History.” *CNN*, February 8, 2016. <http://money.cnn.com/2016/02/08/media/super-bowl-50-ratings/>.
- Parker, Emily. “In Praise of Echo Chambers.” *The Washington Post*, May 22, 2017.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/05/22/in-praise-of-echo-chambers/?utm\\_term=.2e3153e47a79](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/05/22/in-praise-of-echo-chambers/?utm_term=.2e3153e47a79).
- Pavlich, Katie. “Exposing The Black Lives Matter Movement for What It Is: Promotion of Cop Killing.” *Townhall*. September 2, 2015.  
<https://townhall.com/tipsheet/katiepavlich/2015/09/02/exposing-black-lives-matter-for-what-it-is-promotion-of-cop-killing-n2046941>.
- Perez, Chris. “Beyoncé Honors Black Panther Party During Halftime Show.” *The New York Post*, February 8, 2016. <http://nypost.com/2016/02/08/beyonce-honors-black-panther-party-during-halftime-show/>.
- Perlmutter, Dawn. “Super Bowl Halftime Anti-Police Rally.” *Frontpage Magazine*, February 9, 2016. <http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/261770/super-bowl-halftime-anti-police-rally-dawn-perlmutter>.
- “‘Pigs in a Blanket’ Chant at Minnesota Riles Police.” *CBS News*, August 31, 2015.  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pigs-in-a-blanket-chant-at-minnesota-fair-riles-police/>.
- Pitzer, Andrea. “The Bitter History of Law and Order in America.” *Longreads*, April 2017. <https://longreads.com/2017/04/06/the-bitter-history-of-law-and-order-in-america/>.
- “Pro Football is Still America’s Favorite Sport.” *The Harris Poll*, January 26, 2016.  
[http://www.theharrispoll.com/sports/Americas\\_Fav\\_Sport\\_2016.html](http://www.theharrispoll.com/sports/Americas_Fav_Sport_2016.html).

- Richards, Chris. "The Night Beyoncé Won the Super Bowl." *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2016. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/02/07/the-night-beyonce-won-the-super-bowl/?utm\\_term=.4469f5b04f4c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/02/07/the-night-beyonce-won-the-super-bowl/?utm_term=.4469f5b04f4c).
- Robert C. Smith. *Conservatism and Racism, and Why in America They Are the Same*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- Rosenthal, Andrew. "Beyoncé's Halftime Show Inspires Ridiculous Criticism," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2016. <https://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/08/beyonces-halftime-show-inspires-ridiculous-criticism/>.
- Sanburn, Josh. "President Trump Just Signaled Some Dramatic Changes for Police and Criminal Justice." *Time*, January 20, 2017. <http://time.com/4641374/trump-inuaguration-police-protestors-justice/>.
- Sandritter, Mark. "A Timeline of Colin Kaepernick's Nation Anthem Protest and the Athletes Who Joined Him." *SB Nation*, September 25, 2017. <https://www.sbnation.com/2016/9/11/12869726/colin-kaepernick-national-anthem-protest-seahawks-brandon-marshall-nfl>.
- Saxena, Vivek. "Black Lives Matter Has Entire Agenda Destroyed with New Data About Black 'Victims.'" *The Conservative Tribune*, January 28, 2016. <https://conservativetribune.com/black-lives-matter-agenda-data/>.
- Saxena, Vivek. "Here's Why American's Sheriffs Turned Their Back During Beyoncé's Performance." *The Conservative Tribune*, February 8, 2016. <https://conservativetribune.com/americas-sherriffs-beyonce/>.
- "'Shame on All of You': Judge Jeanine Blasts Goodell, Anti-Trump Players." *Fox News Insider*, September 24, 2017. <http://insider.foxnews.com/2017/09/24/judge-jeanine-rips-nfl-roger-goodell-national-anthem-kneelers-after-trump-speech>.
- Sidanius, Jim, Felicia Pratto and Lawrence Bobo. "Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 3 (March 1996): 476-490.
- Siemaszko, Corky. "Birmingham Erupted into Chaos in 1963 as Battle for Civil Rights Exploded in South." *New York Daily News*, May 3, 2012. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/birmingham-erupted-chaos-1963-battle-civil-rights-exploded-south-article-1.1071793>.
- Solon, Olivia. "Facebook Failure: Did Fake News and Polarized Politics Get Trump Elected?" *The Guardian*, November 10, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/nov/10/facebook-fake-news-election-conspiracy-theories>.

- Sorek, Tamir and Robert G. White. "American Football and National Pride: Racial Differences." *Social Science Research* 58 (July 2016): 266-278.  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com.go.libproxy.wakehealth.edu/science/article/pii/S0049089X15300764>.
- Stranahan, Lee. "Beyoncé Super Bowl Performance Pays Tribute to Black Panthers." *Breitbart News*, February 8, 2016. <http://www.breitbart.com/big-hollywood/2016/02/08/2970258/>.
- Tankard, James W. "Chapter 4: The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing." *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, edited by Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy and August Grant, 95-106. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2001.
- Tashman, Brian. "Sandy Rios: Beyonce Ushering in The Antichrist with Her 'Black Racism' and 'Lawlessness.'" *Right Wing Watch*, February 9, 2016.  
<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/sandy-rios-beyonce-ushering-in-the-antichrist-with-her-black-racism-and-lawlessness/>.
- Tavana, Art. "Tomi Lahren Exclusively Talks to Playboy After Her Blaze Fallout." *Playboy*, May 2, 2017. <http://www.playboy.com/articles/tomi-lahren-playboy-conversation>.
- "The Day Beyoncé Turned Black." *Saturday Night Live*, February 14, 2016. Video.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ociMBfkDG1w>.
- Thompson, Derek. "Donald Trump and the Politicization of Everything." *The Atlantic*, September 23, 2017.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/09/donald-trump-and-the-politicization-of-everything/540915/>.
- Turner, Ronald. "The Dangers of Misappropriation: Misusing Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Legacy to Prove the Colorblind Thesis." *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 101-130.
- Walsh, Matt. "Dear Colin Kaepernick: You're Not Oppressed. You're Spoiled." *The Blaze*, August 29, 2016. <http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/dear-colin-kaepernick-youre-not-oppressed-youre-spoiled>.
- Wasserman, David. "House Democrats Are Getting More Diverse. Republicans Aren't." *FiveThirtyEight*, November 6, 2016. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/house-democrats-are-getting-more-diverse-republicans-arent/>.
- Weigel, David. "Three Words That Republicans Wrestle with: 'Black Lives Matter.'" *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2016.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/three-words-that-republicans-wrestle->

with-black-lives-matter/2016/07/12/f5a9dfdc-4878-11e6-90a8-fb84201e0645\_story.html?utm\_term=.0cbbb52462de.

Whitson, Kevin. "Photo from Right Before Beyonce's Halftime Show Emerges, Changes the Entire Story." *Western Journalism*, February 9, 2016.

<https://www.westernjournalism.com/photo-from-right-before-beyonces-halftime-show-emerges-changes-the-entire-story/>.

"Who Has Performed at Super Bowl Halftime?" *Sports Illustrated*, February 3, 2017.

<https://www.si.com/nfl/2017/02/05/super-bowl-halftime-performances>.

Wyche, Steve. "Colin Kaepernick Explains Why He Sat During National Anthem." *NFL.com*, August 27, 2016.

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000691077/article/colin-kaepernick-explains-protest-of-national-anthem>.

Zaru, Deena. "Beyonce Gets Political at Super Bowl, Pays Tribute to 'Black Lives Matter.'" *CNN*, February 9, 2016.

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/08/politics/beyonce-super-bowl-black-lives-matter/>

## APPENDIX A

**Conservative Response Sample Text: *Breitbart News***

“Beyoncé Super Bowl Performance Pays Tribute to Black Panthers” by Lee Stranahan

Singer Beyoncé Knowles brought black liberation politics to the Super Bowl halftime show Sunday in a performance that appeared to pay tribute to the Black Panthers.

Backed by a cadre of backup dancers sporting Black Panther berets, Beyoncé performed her new single “Formation” in homage to the Black Lives Matter movement.

At one point during the performance, the dancers formed an X seemingly in tribute to black Muslim activist Malcolm X and raised their fists in the “black power” salute.

The choreography wasn’t restricted to the football field; the halftime show was part of a marketing plan that put out messaging across multiple platforms, from social media to mainstream media.

A picture posted to Twitter also showed several of the performance’s backup dancers giving the black power salute while holding a sign reading, “Justice for Mario Woods.” Woods was shot by police after refusing to drop a knife in 2015.

It’s the latest move by Knowles and husband Jay-Z to associate themselves with the Black Lives Matter movement. Just last week, Jay-Z announced he was giving \$1.5 million from his struggling streaming music service Tidal to the Black Lives Matter movement and other groups.

On Saturday, Knowles suddenly dropped the music video for her new song “Formation.”

As Breitbart News reported, the video contains sequences involving white police officers harassing young black people, including a shot of graffiti that reads “stop shooting us.” The video also shows Beyoncé lying on a flooded New Orleans police car, in a reference to the Katrina disaster that many blame on George W. Bush.

An Instagram photo posted by Beyoncé’s mother Tina Knowles showed the black leather-clad dancers raising clenched fist in a Black Power salute — a powerful mix of iconic imagery guaranteed to grab eyeballs and make headlines.

Although Beyoncé was trying to capture headlines by using politically incendiary imagery, the songs lyrics are mostly about black identity, a theme that goes back to songs like James Brown’s “Say It Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud.” Lyrics from the Beyoncé song include:

My daddy Alabama, Momma Louisiana

You mix that Negro with that Creole, make a Texas Bama

I like my baby hair with baby hair and afros

I like my Negro nose with Jackson 5 nostrils.

However, in 2016, black people being unashamed of being black is hardly newsworthy. Beyoncé grew up in comfortable middle-class surroundings, in a world created by unapologetically black artist and athletes like James Brown, Richard Pryor, and Muhammad Ali.

The irony, of course, is that Beyoncé Knowles and Jay-Z owe their success to the capitalist system the leftist Black Lives Matter movement is intent on destroying. Jay-Z's story of going from rags to riches is well-known, as he went from being a drug dealer in the projects of New York to becoming an entertainment star and entrepreneur. Beyoncé is the child of a small business owner and a sales manager for Xerox. Both biographies fly in the face of the Black Lives Matter narrative that black people somehow need to be "liberated" from the free market.

As Breitbart News has exhaustively shown, the Black Lives Matter movement is merely the latest incarnation of the radical left's activist community. The revolutionary communist anti-police group pays homage to convicted terrorist Assata Shakur at every event and cites the communist Black Panthers as a key influence. However, both Jay-Z and Beyoncé demonstrated a keen understanding of how to profit from the leftist-created culture wars in the United States.

Beyoncé Knowles announced her new "Formation" stadium tour immediately after the performance at the Super Bowl. Presale tickets for the European and American tour go on sale tomorrow.

## APPENDIX B

**Liberal Response Sample Text: *MSNBC***

“Beyoncé Delivers Politically Charged Super Bowl Halftime Performance” by Adam Howard

Denver Broncos linebacker Von Miller may have won the Super Bowl MVP Sunday, but the real star of the night was arguably pop icon Beyoncé, who delivered a riveting, politically charged performance as part of an exuberant halftime show.

The elaborately staged performance of her new viral sensation “Formation” was the culmination of both brilliant marketing and a steadily more socially conscious persona the “Drunk in Love” singer has been honing in recent years. The night before the game, Beyoncé released quite possibly her most provocative music video to date for the song “Formation,” which featured odes to Hurricane Katrina, Black Lives Matter, natural hair and so much more.

And while her Super Bowl performance didn’t incorporate all the rapid-fire imagery of the music video, it was no less pointed. As a nod to the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Black Panthers, Beyoncé emerged (in a Michael Jackson-inspired outfit) with a virtual battalion of beret-clad dancers who, true to the song’s title, performed a flawlessly syncopated routine in unison. The song and its incendiary video have been hailed as a call to arms for black women and activists, and a rebuke of the so-called politics of responsibility.

Throughout the video, which also includes tributes to New Orleans’ culture, fashion and musicians, Beyoncé is seen astride a sinking New Orleans police car. Perhaps not surprisingly, that imagery has brought about accusations of an anti-police bias on the singer’s part. For example, one woman wrote on Beyoncé’s Facebook page: “As the wife of a police officer, I am offended by this entire video. Rise above and stay above the strife. For a girl who grew up in a privileged, wealthy family, she has no business pandering to those who didn’t.”

Meanwhile, others started promoting a #boycottBeyonce hastag before she even strode onto the Super Bowl stage. And over on Fox News, former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani and some of the network’s anchors criticized her performance, while highlighting the fact that she received a police escort to the game.

“I thought it was really outrageous that she used it as a platform to attack police officers, who are the people who protect her,” Giuliani said on Monday. “What we should be doing in the African-American community and all communities is build up respect for police officers.”

Still, in many circles, the “Formation” video and its righteously defiant tone has gotten plenty of downright rapturous praise.

“Beyoncé places her own reckless, country blackness – one of afros, cornrows, and negro noses, brown liquor and brown girls, hot sauce, and of brown boys and cheddar bay biscuits – in conversation with and as descended from a broader southern blackness that is frequently obscured and unseen in national discourses, save for as (dying, lynched, grotesque, excessive) spectacle,” wrote blogger Zandria Robinson in a breathless breakdown of the music video. “Through this reckless country blackness, she becomes every black southern woman possible for her to reasonably inhabit, moving through time, class, and space.”

She also deftly plays with the use and meaning of the word *slay* – taking the power of the word from those who might literally murder black bodies and making it a rebellious term for people of color to rise above their haters through the power of their talent, pride and unconventional beauty.

The music video presents the pop star’s most overt endorsement of the Black Lives Matter movement to date. The singer, who rarely gives interviews, and almost never speaks out on sociopolitical issues, raised eyebrows last year when she followed Black Lives Matter activist and recently declared Baltimore mayor candidate DeRay McKesson on Twitter, one of only 10 people she has endorsed on the social media platform.

In the video for “Formation,” she includes the powerful image of a young black boy clad in a hoodie dancing furiously in front of a line of cops. The policemen raise their hands in a symbolic acknowledgment of defeat, which is interspersed with graffiti that reads: “Stop shooting us.”

“Formation’s references are designed for maximum resonance – or perhaps alienation, depending on where you stand. It’s a song ostensibly about Beyoncé’s identity that forces the listener to acknowledge their own identity – a bold move from the world’s biggest pop star, who over her career has been no stranger to the kind of song written so vaguely as to apply to anyone and anything,” writes *The Guardian*’s Alex Macpherson.

Ironically, for much of her early years in the spotlight, Beyoncé was dinged for having a lack of substance and even more insidiously, for perhaps being a willing victim of colorism. And yet in “Formation,” when she proudly declares her affinity for her “Jackson Five nostrils,” there can be no doubt anymore about where Beyoncé stands and who she stands with.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

**Contact Information**

Kristina Kokkonos  
kokkr16@wfu.edu

**Education**

*Wake Forest University*

Master of Arts – Communication  
December 2017

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Bachelor of Arts – Journalism and Communication (Majors), Music (Minor)  
May 2016

*University of Manchester*

Exchange Program  
Fall 2014

**Publications**

*Score Magazine*

Editor-in-Chief  
Spring 2016

*Critical Media Studies: Student Essays on Contemporary Sitcoms, Volume III*

Author – Chapter 10, “*Lowie*: Thoughtful Take on Women or Depiction of  
Misunderstanding?”  
Spring 2017

**References**

Available upon request.