

DISCURSIVELY FRAMING U.S. MEDIA AND STATE HEGEMONY:  
POLICE SHOOTINGS, RAPE CULTURE, AND THE  
TRANSNATIONAL STRUGGLE

A DISSERTATION

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BY

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## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother Karla and her other half, Grady; my brothers, Jermaile, Darnell, Tommy; my sisters, Ciara, Little Bull, Roxie, and Tia; and my aunt Toni. I am because you are. Love.

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Love to my A-1, Day-1 Negus.

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## ABSTRACT

MARTEL A. PIPKINS

### DISCURSIVELY FRAMING U.S. MEDIA AND STATE HEGEMONY: POLICE SHOOTINGS, RAPE CULTURE, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL STRUGGLE

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This dissertation intends to thematically integrate issues of race, class, and gender as they relate to state-sanctioned and media (discursive) violence. This is done using three case studies that take different, but interconnected, routes. The first case study traces the relationship between people of color and the state, outlining the asymmetric war occurring between them. The second case study examines a part of the state apparatus, law-enforcement, and its narratives used to justify lethal force. The final case study examines how news media frames violence against women as personal, isolated incidents as opposed to a social problem. Taken together, these case studies demonstrate how both the state and mass media are involved in the generating or reinforcing violence against marginalized groups.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As society undergoes diversification, violence against marginalized groups—paradoxically—any of whom are labeled as a “protected class”—increases. I assert this paradox of violence is not the result of a backlash or anomie. Rather it is rooted in the state-sanctioned control over the bodies and social lives of minorities and is the results of media’s normalization of violence.

Last year in the U.S., police killed over 1000 civilians, with a disproportionate number of the deaths occurring among people of color (Guadalupe-Diaz 2016) The militarization of the police is enhancing this clash which could be framed as asymmetric warfare. A rape is reported every 6 seconds (Solnit 2014), yet a minuscule number of perpetrators are charged and arrested (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network [RAINN] 2017). There are over 400,000 rape kits that are untested (Solnit 2014). One on hand, the continuous killing of people of color by the police and the failure to charge and arrest perpetrators of sexual violence against women reveals a form of state-sanctioned violence. On the other hand, news media complements this state-sanctioned violence as a form of discursive violence. News media often give little attention to white-collar crimes such as police brutality, and tend to report violence against women in ways that diminish the scale of the problem. Together, news media and the state form a hegemonic apparatus that reinforces violence against marginalized groups.

While scholarship on news media's reporting of violence against women is extensive, generally in the form of quantitative content analysis, little attention has been lavished on the linguistic structure of such reporting. The academic literature examining police narratives about police shootings is also limited. Finally, there has been an increase of global studies within the social sciences, recognizing the interconnectedness of the social worlds on a global level; however, this line of inquiry is still limited in its scope. Part of this project is aimed at expanding this practice.

## THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Police killed 1092 people in 2016 alone, rape culture has pervaded college campuses across the country with many women college students experiencing some form of sexual assault in their first year, and the state, along with news media, has continued to be an effectively complicit in some of this violence. Taken together, the purpose of these studies is to provide a multifaceted approach to the study of these forms of violence. People of color, especially in lower social classes, are experiencing high levels of police violence and women are experiencing an unprecedented amount of gendered violence. Each case study in this dissertation lays the ground work for the next. *Chi-Raq* develops the theoretical grounds, while *I Feared for My Life* utilizes to study the actual events between police and civilians of color. *Descaling* focuses on the media's role in reinforcing the racial and gendered violence by their omission of context and other linguistic methods. Here, decontextualization creates a Master Narrative (isolated incident). As the reader reaches the last of these case studies, a solid understanding of critical discourse analysis and a master narrative will emerge. *Chi-Raq* and *I Feared* may

appear more closely related. *Descaling*, however, offers a gendered approach. I will argue that violence against people of color and women is carried out by the State and normalized by news media. Taken together, these three studies reveal the State's involvement in violence and the news media's framing of such violence. Recognizing this state-sanctioned, media supplemented violence is a critical step in addressing the problem.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This dissertation is intended as a contribution to cultural sociology, the sociology of news, criminology, and the literature on violence against women. Each of the issues discussed concerns a current pressing public issue witnessed in the news, social media, political activities, and classrooms across campuses. However, while these issues are a part of the public dialogue, they lag in the academic conversations. One of the goals in this dissertation is to put an academic stamp on them, that is to provide a scientific evaluation of phenomena. Too often social science lags behind current social processes, only giving them scientific review when their consequences are more overt and visible or when non-academics intensively “mobilize” the issue. Part of this lag could be attributed to what Patricia Hill Collins (1989:751) has called the “Eurocentric masculinist knowledge-validation process”, wherein “scholars, publishers, and other experts represent specific interests and credentialing processes, and their knowledge claims must satisfy the epistemological and political criteria of the contexts in which they reside.”

## DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

This dissertation is arranged into three different case studies. Following the introduction, the second chapter provides a background for the reader to gain in-depth knowledge about the core concepts throughout the dissertation, it also reviews the literature concerning asymmetric war, policing brutality and the media, and sexual violence against women and the media. Chapter three provides the theoretical frameworks and sociological perspectives on which the dissertation is based. Chapter four and five lay out the methodology along with the designs of each study. Following the three foundational chapters, Chapters five through eight contain the case studies. Finally, chapter seven brings the study to a closure, summarizing the major findings and implications of each study while also highlighting their contributions and limitations, and recommendations for further research.

This dissertation intends to thematically integrate issues of race, class, and gender as they relate to violence in three case studies. In doing so, each case study takes a different, but interconnected, route.

### *Case Study I*

Starting with theory, the first case study, *Chi-Raq: When the City Itself Becomes a Technology of War*, intends to apply Saskia Sassen's theoretical arguments of territory, authority, and rights. I borrow ideas from her article (2010b) concerning militarized police forces and unarmed civilians in an asymmetric war. The city of Chicago is used as a case study.

### *Case Study II*

The second case study, *I Feared for My Life*, provides empirical evidence concerning the concept of asymmetric war. It employs critical discourse analysis to examine discursive strategies used by police officers and their spokespersons to avoid blame and invoke empathy for their deadly use of force. The focus here is primarily on the shooting of unarmed Blacks; but it also includes the murders of other people of color. Some of the preliminary findings suggest that officers have created a master narrative, which becomes a sociological phenomenon, as opposed to a series of idiosyncratic stories.

### *Case Study III*

The third case study, *Descaling the Issue*, adds a gendered component to this investigation, which emphasizes the relationship between gender and violence. Similar to the previous case study, this study utilizes a feminist critical discourse analysis to examine the discursive strategies used in news media when reporting issues of violence against women. While studies discussing the framing of violence against women as isolated incidents are not new, this study shows exactly how this is accomplished through various discursive approaches.

## CHAPTER II

### THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CORE CONCEPTS

This chapter reviews the intellectual development of the core ideas. The theory of hegemony has evolved in various disciplines including sociology, women's studies, English, and postcolonial studies. I begin with hegemony, particularly what is referred to as hegemonic apparatus, to lay bare the foundation on which the present study is based. In doing so, a short discussion on the concept of the state itself is necessary, especially since there are many conceptualizations of the notion of the state. Similarly, it is imperative to discuss theoretical developments concerning news media. Following the review of literature on the hegemonic apparatus (state and media), I will discuss the literature on the sanctioned violence against marginalized groups.

#### HEGEMONIC APPARATUS: STATE AND MEDIA HEGEMONY

A Gramscian approach to ideology helps grasp the significance of the state and media hegemony. Antonio Gramsci's reflections on the nation-state were central to his thought on and hegemony (Liguori 2016:49). It was "Gramsci's fundamental opposition to economism and class-reductionism that enabled him to understand the ideological not in terms of mere ideas, but rather as a material ensemble of hegemonic apparatuses in civil society" (Rehmann 2014:117). Accordingly, I explore various concrete conditions, artifacts, media, and other text-mediated influences as they reinforce particular

ideologies. Ideology is essential for understanding the condition of marginalized groups and their socio-historical progress and development.

Hegemony is understood as a process in which the ruling class or dominant group secures the consent of the general masses by embedding particular ideology through the major socializing institutions such as family, schooling, religion, media, and governance for the pervasion of its practices into everyday life. Gramsci (2011) refers to the hegemonic apparatus, which is combined with the “coercive apparatuses, typical of the state” (Liguori 2016:8). Civil Society also plays a role in Gramsci’s theorizing of the state, or the extended state. Gramsci understood that hegemonic apparatuses within civil society are not necessarily private (Gramsci 2011; Hoare and Smith 2014), but that they “in reality constitute a fully-fledged part of the state—thus allowing us to speak of the ‘extended state’” (Liguori 2016:9). Hegemonic power includes both force and (willing or unwilling) consent, and for Gramsci (2011), control of the hegemony, especially cultural hegemony is required for large scale social change. This “hegemony is achieved through political action and organization...a class must transcend what Gramsci calls ‘economic-corporative’ organization to become politically hegemonic” (Hobsbawm 2011:324).

According to Gramsci, the struggle for hegemony must occur before, during, and after the transition of power of one group to another (Hobsbawm 2011). This is especially important because in the United States the “core of ruling-class power lies in the subalternity of the masses rather than in coercion” (Hobsbawm 2011:327). Gramsci knew well not to “underestimate the role of the battle of ideas in defining the relations of force”

(Liguori 2016:40). The preconditions of the state are at once material, spiritual and cultural (Liguori 2016).

## THE CONCEPT OF THE EXTENDED STATE

Gramsci often wrote about the state as a “protagonist of history” (Liguori 2016:49). He emphasized, however, that the proletariat is against the state, but only because the state is a capitalist Nationalist one, and in this case, racist and sexist as well. The crisis of the state is the crisis of ruling-class hegemony given the great masses departure from passivity. Part of this crisis and subsequent exit is the result of the subaltern intellectuals stymying the gatekeepers of mass media. In this case, bystanders who record police brutality and organizations like the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, who work with media on reporting issues of violence against women. Gramsci (2011) made the point that not everything in civil society is good, and not everything from the state is bad, as it can “express universal needs that originate in the struggle of the subaltern classes...and be an instrument for the redistribution of resources in the name of justice” (Liguori 2016:40).

## SYMBOLIC POWER

While Gramsci’s Marxian theory of the state is core here, there are other elements of the state, such as symbolic power and resources, that should be highlighted, especially as it relates to hegemony. In her article, *The Modern State And The Primitive Accumulation Of Symbolic Power*, Mara Loveman (2005) attempts to set a foundation for the systematic historical study of primitive accumulation of symbolic power. The modern state itself is seen as a symbolic accomplishment, as well as a military, political,



economic, pedagogical, corrective, and ideological organization (Loveman 2005). Part of these accomplishments come from the state's ability to exercise symbolic power. Thus symbolic power could precede the state's accomplishments. States tend to have the capability to "order social life through the notion that its practices are natural, inevitable, or self-evidently useful" (Loveman 2005:1654). Two phases are distinguished analytically: 1) "primitive accumulation of symbolic power and 2) routine exercise of symbolic power" (Loveman 2005:1654).

Drawing on Bourdieu, Loveman (2005:1655) argues that symbolic power is "the power to constitute the given. It is the ability to make appear as natural, inevitable, and thus apolitical, that which is a product of historical struggle and human intervention." It stems from the acknowledgement of authority as being legitimate. The essential aspect of this symbolic power is misrecognition, that is, the inability to see power being wielded in the first place (Loveman 2005:1655). Symbolic power is critical in that it is not only in the struggle itself, but it even "shapes the terrain upon which such struggles take place" (Loveman 2005:1656). Cultural power and symbolic power, while they may have similarities, are not the same. Unlike ideological power, symbolic power is "exercised through naturalization of the practices and cognitive schemes that make it possible for such messages to resonate with their intended audience" (Loveman 2005:1656).

Symbolic power in this case provides the pathways for states to implement ideological power via symbols and cultural messages. As state actors are often tied to mass media (e.g., Roger Ailes, as previous chair of Fox News and former media strategist for 1980s Republican Party), further revealing what Gramsci called the extended state, these uses of

symbolic power become important to examine. As Loveman (2005:1678) argues, the state's power is not derived from autonomy from society, but rather from the webs of interconnections to actors and institutions outside the state." The phrase "outside the state" here can be understood as Gramsci's notion of civil society.

Because the state can be "called upon to enforce power relationships in every domain of social practice, it is the ultimate guarantor of micro-powers"—those powers are exercised outside of the political sphere (Castells 2009:15). Although state power depends on force or the ability to use force, disciplinary discourses, or "the logic of domination can also be embedded in discourses as alternative or complementary forms of exercising power" (Castells 2009:15). So, while force is backed by disciplinary discourses, the disciplinary discourses are also backed up by the potential use of violence, and "state violence is rationalized, internalized, and ultimately legitimized by discourses that frame/shape human action" (Castells 2009:16).

#### NEWS MEDIA AS TOUR GUIDE

Sociologist Nancy Berns (2004) explores the way media shapes our understandings of social problems. Specifically, she reveals how depictions of domestic violence survivors to reflect dominant media perspectives. She examines and critiques the way domestic violence and other social problems are formed by guidelines that promote show and entertainment, as well as political agendas. Berns also argues that social problems should be constructed on the socio-cultural context where violence is learned, encouraged, and tolerated (Berns 2004). Media is central to this process. Berns (2004:35) argues, "media have become popular tour guides for people in their process of learning

about social problems” as people rely on it as their main source of information and sometimes their *only* resource for reflecting on social problems.

The influence of media is often linked to current social problems such as juvenile delinquency, but media is also connected to social problems in another way. According to Berns (2004:37) it shapes the way people think about these issues: “the media are how they *experience* social problems” (emphasis in original). Rape and other forms of violence against women are invariably portrayed as isolated events. Thus, as the media shapes our thinking of violence against women, we understand them as personal troubles instead of public issues. Highlighting the need to understand social facts, Solnit (2014:38) asserts that “we have dots so close they’re splatters melting into a stain, but hardly anyone connects them, or names that stain”

As millions tune in and depend on news for their everyday lives, the content and ideologies of these events become essential to examine and understand. Often, it is what is omitted that underlies such ideology. Calls for change to the social order is reflective of various feminist standpoints, which moves beyond merely diagnosing the (dis)order. If this number of murders occurred in other scenarios it is very likely that it would be understood as a *war* or a social issue. Mass shootings, for example, when reported or discussed tend to have some social implications concerning patterns, policies, and the need for social change. This is not to say these reports fully embrace the broader social context when it comes to mass shootings, but may do so more than reports on violence against women. While the policy discussions may be insufficient and often used as political ammunition between parties, at the very minimum policy is a part of the

conversation. This varying representation in news media “creates an interpretive framework for solutions to the social problems of crime that favor some social reaction and/or reaction over others” (Gillespie et al. 2013:227).

## NEWS: MOBILIZATION AND THEORY

Scholars in political science studying news and its construction of political meaning have argued that news media is vital for a democratic society in that “democratic citizens depend on the press to be their witness in the corridors of power” (Just 2011:105). The news is a medium for “continuing education,” which reinforces what citizens learned in school through continuous updates. Furthermore, news is meant to serve as a medium for groups in society to have a voice and be given attention (Curran 2005). This functions complements its role in providing “liberating access to alternative ideas” (Curran 2005:126). Sociologists and political scientists studying the political economy of mass media discuss the ability of adversarial journalism to enrich democracy as it “can excite, involve, and mobilize people in the processes of democracy,” which can lead to better outcomes and “assist society to adapt to necessary change” (Curran 2005:126-127). This potential medium for change extends into various sociopolitical spheres. As Solnit states, “if we talked about crimes like these [rape] and why they are so common, we’d have to talk about what kinds of profound change this society, or this nation, or nearly every nation needs” (Solnit 2014:23). Overall, the press shares responsibility for public knowledge as well as misinformation and since they have the capacity to “legitimize some views and to marginalize others, the news media are an

important part of [the] framing process” and continuing education (Gillespie et al. 2013:227).

Two non-mutually exclusive theories discuss the relationship between news media and its viewers: the active audience approach and the agenda setting approach (Papadouka et al. 2016). The former approach suggests that the media and political agenda could be influenced by public opinion. The latter suggests that selective coverage tends to lead public opinion, regardless of newsworthiness of the topic under discussion. Similar to Berns’s perspective (2004), agenda setting theory suggests that mass media tells people what to think about and also how to think about them. The focus here is on the process of this second-level agenda setting. As Hamilton warns (2009:41), we must remember, “language and discourse are produced by someone(s). These powers of discourses are, in part, wielded by active producers and agents in performative ways.”

As such, the news have led to significant problems. Two of these include event-centered news and timeliness. News is often released and defined as events; however, this can be problematic as “the resulting product is episodic and disconnected, making it difficult for the audience to put a unique event into any knowable context” (Curran 2005:107). Related to this is timeliness. In the news world being the first to report or have “the scoop” is an essential element for news broadcasters—to the point that the “hard events—developments that have taken a clear and definable shape within the past twenty-four hours” (Curran 2005:107) comes to be the definition of news. This race to be first can often lead to misinformation spreading like wildfire. Event-centered news may reinforce the idea that issues like rape and other forms of sexual assault are disconnected,

isolated events while the timeliness element could create an ahistorical component. The wildfire here is the descaling of violence against women and the reinforcement of racist attitudes and actions.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

According to Rebecca Solnit (2014), a rape is reported in the United States every 6.2 minutes; however, there are about 400,000 untested rap kits in this country. Women worldwide in the age range of 15-44 are “more likely to die or be maimed because of male violence than because of cancer, malaria, war and traffic accidents combined” (Solnit 2014:30). In the U.S., 90% of the murders committed are by men. Furthermore, there are over 1000 domestic homicides a year (Solnit 2014). Additionally, domestic violence, or intimate partner violence is the number-one cause of injury to women in the U.S. Even though the issue is widespread, it is often discussed and understood as private, individual troubles.

One of the reasons violence against women appears to be so isolated may stem from the larger structural apparatus of gendered oppression. This apparatus has incorporated hegemonic language, which is a salient topic in feminist theories. Utilizing these helps us to see how some of the more common frames in news media tend to highlight “certain kinds of criminals and their victims, while ignoring or downplaying others, thereby transmitting messages about who matters most in society” (Gillespie et al. 2013:227).

C. Wright Mills (1959) asserted that “the sociological imagination” includes an understanding of the intersection between history and biography, as well as the

intellectual skills in connecting personal troubles to public issues of the social structure. The sociological imagination provides the “capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world...it is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two” (Mills 1959:7). War, for example, may be a personal problem for the civilian trapped in the war zones; however, as Mills (1959:9) asserts, “the structural issues of war have to do with its causes; with what types of men it throws up into command; with its effects upon economic and political, family and religious institutions, with the unorganized irresponsibility of a world of nation-states.”

This example of war is of interest here when we consider writer Rebecca Solnit’s (2014:19) description on violence against women as “The Longest War.” However, as news media is often event-centered and ideologically-laden, this *war* is decontextualized as such - isolated and disconnected from the social structure that may influence it. In other words, violence against women is viewed as a personal, instead of social, issue. The role of news media is crucial in this process.

War is generally thought of on a larger scale, typically between nations. Part of what Solnit (2014) does by naming her chapter “The Longest War,” elevates the scale of the issue. Scale encompasses both physical place and social space and is “the product of interrelations, as the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity, and as always in the process of formation” (Cohen and Frazier 2014:253). In other words, scales are the different

dimensions of the social. The concept of scale is more often utilized by scholars of global studies in analyses of national, regional, and global processes and formations. More importantly, they discuss the rescaling dynamics and multiscalar character of various processes (Sassen 2007). In particular, “[s]cale refers to the arenas in which political, economic, and social processes and practices are imagined and investigated as occurring” (Cohen and Frazier 2014:253-254). This case utilizes the concept of scale to examine the rescaling of the arena where this issue of violence against women is recognized.

Parts of the women’s movement used language to challenge the scale at which the political is recognized through their slogan “The personal is political” (Cohen and Frazier 2014). This was essential, especially since many of the issues women were/are facing occur in the private (domestic) scale such as rape, battering, birth control, abortion, etc. Adding the domestic/private scale to what is considered political helped in raising public awareness and discourse for these issues.

#### ASYMMETRIC WAR

Mills’ example of war is also of interest here. Sassen (2010b:36) describes what she calls asymmetric war as war “between a conventional and unconventional forces on urban terrain and armed insurgents.” While she specifically focuses on nation-state military powers and armed insurgent groups, this idea is applied here to other conventional and unconventional forces—the increasingly militarized police and unarmed residents of color in the city. However, it is not merely an issue of physical force, a large part of the unevenness between these two groups is the hegemonic power the state and its apparatus (e.g. police) hold over people of color. As Ralf Dahrendorf



(1968:34) argued, people are free and equal before the law, but not after. Once norms arise that impose requirements on behavior once that behavior is measured in terms of norms, hierarchy tends to emerge. A system of inequality arises when we use the sanctioning system to maintain social norms because some roles or categories have inescapable restrictions attached to them. These sanctions then create a hierarchy of distributive status and power. It is important to recognize that the state and its law-enforcement apparatus has the power to create such norms (laws), and sanctions; and influence the distribution of status/power.

Here I apply Saskia Sassen's (2010) proposition that the city facilitates a "technology of war" to Chicago as a site of urbanized warfare. That is, components of the city including its police, policy, physical space or territory, and other elements may be used against people of color, in an asymmetric warfare. The state cannot simply export or remove all minorities, but it may implement policy that leads to economic deprivation, residential segregation, and police brutality. It may also employ cultural racism and assist in the dumping of drugs inside certain neighborhoods (as it has been alleged) while creating and enhancing drug law/policy.

War? Yes, war. The immediate and sustained resistance to the police following Mike Brown's murder revealed the low intensity war between the state and Black people, and the disproportionate use of force against protesters following the grand jury's decision escalated the conflict. To the world at large, Ferguson looked like a war zone because the police resembled the military with their helmets, flak jackets, armed personnel carriers, and M-16 rifles. But African-American residents of Ferguson and St Louis proper, and in impoverished communities across the country, did not have to endure tear gas or face down riot cops to know that they were already living in a war zone—hence Mike Brown's and Dorian Johnson's initial trepidation toward the police --Robin D.G. Kelley (2014)

Over the past years, Chicago has been increasingly referred to as “Chi-Raq” as political pundits, news media, and celebrities make global comparisons between the death rates found in Chicago and Iraq (Lee 2015). Many of these outlets, including Spike Lee’s film documentary titled “Chi-Raq” in one way takes this comparative view, but stops short of understanding the relational elements and larger structures involved in the high rates of gun violence and other crimes in Chicago and other large cities in the United States. There have been a few media observers and academic scholars, however, that point to the socioeconomic disparities, gentrification, and other oppressive processes that influence the crime rates, but this is a much smaller piece in the public discourse.

Although the larger processes, including the conditions and activities occurring in Chicago that gives it its nickname “Chi-Raq” are often removed from the discussion, the war metaphor forces us to think of the larger picture. As Robert Ivie (1987:166) argued, “metaphor is the base of rhetorical invention. Elaborating a primary image into a well-formed argument produces a motive, or interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify”. As Jacoby Cochran (2015:12) has pointed out, similar to “traditional wars and war rhetoric that are accompanied by borders, designated oppositions, and somewhat strategic reasoning, this perpetual, metaphorical war continues to expand as a discursive formation with very material and ongoing manifestations”. This resembles Gramsci’s theory of hegemony as he recognized the ideological beyond mere ideas, but more precisely as a “material ensemble of hegemonic apparatuses in civil society” (Rehmann 2014:117).

## MEDIA AND STATE VIOLENCE

Criminology Professor Todd Callais (2016) shows that riot coverage accounted for 81% of all coverage of police killings since the shooting death of Michael Brown. This is critical because “media have become popular tour guides for people in their process of learning about social problems” (Berns 2004:35). They rely on it as their main source of information and sometimes their *only* resource for reflecting on social problems. Moreover, representation in news media “creates an interpretive framework for solutions to the social problems of crime that favor some social action and/or reaction over others” (Gillespie et al. 2013:227). Thus, if news media presents riots as the major problem, removed from their motive and rationale, it influences social (re)action to be geared towards these riots, instead of what ignited them in the first place. Particular frames used in news media tend to highlight “certain kinds of criminals and their victims, while ignoring or downplaying others, thereby transmitting messages about who matters most in society” (Gillespie et al. 2013:227). News media is important for understanding the general public sentiment, opinion, and reactions to social issues and events, especially since they have the capacity to legitimize particular views while marginalizing others (Gillespie et al. 2013:227).

Media coverage on shooting victims “more intensely covers cases where victims are indictable” (Callais 2016). For example, Michael Brown and Sandra Bland, two African-American individuals, were framed as hostile and dangerous, and received higher coverage than Tamir Rice and Walter Scott, a child and a man running away, respectively. National and online coverage was also low about the shootings involving

then 22-year old John Crawford, who was shot on sight at a Wal-Mart after police received false reports that Crawford was waving a gun at customers, along with the case of Sam DuBose, who police killed and then falsely reported him dragging an officer with his car (Callais 2016). Although state-sanctioned killings of people of color is not new in the slightest, the media attention to the onslaught of slayings by police have assisted in the increase of public discussion on its use of brute force and militarization as well as smaller discussions on the morality of police, questioning if there is such thing as a “good cop”. This media framework is due, in large part, to the changing social relations in news media as it increasingly comes from those outside the news conglomerates and professional reporters (Curran 2005).

## SUMMARY

This section provided an overview on the literature involving hegemony, the conception of the state, violence against women, and news media. While it is becoming clear that news media complements state-sanctioned violence, it is necessary to examine the way this relationship plays out. The news media and the state form a hegemonic apparatus that plays a role in the violence against marginalized groups. Because everyday people are dependent on the news for a form of continuing education and information, it is vital that the news is examined sociologically to unpack any potential ideology and power being conveyed.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This project is divided into three case studies. As a result, the methodological framework is versatile. I test the core premise using critical discourse analysis (CDA) on three case studies, thematically built on race, gender, and class. In addition to CDA, however, I utilize comparative-historical methods, particularly for the first case study. Breaking this project into three case studies allows me some “before method space” to engage in analytical tactics or “the freedom to position myself in whatever ways I want or need vis-vis the object of study” (Sassen 2015:xii). That is, this strategy allows me to grasp what is needed for each case, allowing me the space to examine each case in-depth individually, while also threading them together.

In regards to race, the juxtaposition of high profile cases of questionable police killings of unarmed Black and Latinx <sup>1</sup>are examined in a prematurely designated post-racial U.S. using CDA. The pervasiveness of rape culture within news media is also analyzed using CDA. Finally, the use of the city as war technology and rhetoric on civilian urban low wealth communities of color is deliberate. The city here is grasped as a means of physical control and class subjugation and is explored using comparative-historical methods and critical discourse analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Latinx is a gender inclusive term referring to people of Latin American and/or Caribbean descent in the United States

## COMPARATIVE-HISTORICAL METHODOLOGY

At the center of social change are processes that need to be analyzed to understand the contemporary world and the way it came to be—some of those central processes include globalization, imperialism, democratization, secularization, technological advancement, social movements, war, and revolutions (Lange 2013). Comparative-historical researchers in the social sciences have made major contributions to these areas. Comparative-historical analysis includes four elements: epistemology, aggregate units of analysis, the comparative method, and within-case methods. However, as Matthew Lange (2013:2) points out, “competition and conflict between different methodological camps limit methodological pluralism”. Comparative-historical analysis tends to combine ideographic explanations and nomothetic explanations (which is often privileged over ideographic explanations and viewed by some as more “scientific”) (Lange 2013). However, comparative-historical researchers tend to gravitate towards methods that offer ideographic insight. Central to historical-comparative methods is insight, which is generally evidence for understanding one particular case or a set of cases.

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse is the broader idea communicated through language that functions on a level higher than grammar and semantics. Discourse analysis reveals the consequences of particular language forms as they operate in various socio-political and cultural arenas (Machin and Mayr 2012:20).

Textual analysis – and critical discourse analysis in particular - work to “develop ways of analyzing language which address its involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist society,” and as a “resource for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic form” (Fairclough 1995:1). Many scholars believe that this method becomes more urgent in capitalist society, where text is a crucial technology of ruling, used to mediate social organization, transporting power in ideologies and practices across sites and among people (Peet and Hartwick 2009:246). Analyzing a text to examine and unpack its ideological elements help to “reveal how reality is selectively framed, subjects and objects are positioned, and *issues are masked, silenced and written out of the picture*” (Bauer et al. 2014, emphasis added). As discourse is neither neutral nor transparent (Hamilton 2009:40), it is critical that we investigate what is there and what is missing.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has its roots in critical linguistics, which examines language for what could be revealed by looking for absences (Machin and Mayr 2012:2). These scholars viewed language as a social practice that is connected to our actions and the construction of society. Central to this view is exploring how language naturalizes world-views, giving them a taken-for-granted appearance. In other words, “[t]hrough language, certain kinds of practices, ideas, values, and identities are promoted and naturalized” (Machin and Mayr 2012:3). CDA differs from critical linguistics in that it links language, power, and ideology.

While there are various forms of CDA, one commonality among them is the view that “language both shapes and is shaped by society,” that is, language and other modes

of communication are means of social construction (Machin and Mayr 2012:4).

Discourse is the broader idea that is communicated through language in any given context that functions on a level higher than grammar and semantics. CDA attempts to reveal the consequences of particular language forms as they operate in various socio-political and cultural arenas (Machin and Mayr 2012:20). Critical language studies can be understood as “processes of analysing [sic] linguistic elements in order to reveal connections between language, power, and ideology that are hidden from people”, and, it is “often in the smallest linguistic details where power relations and political ideology can be found” (Machin and Mayr 2012:5)

It thus becomes important to systematically analyze semiotic choices of both words and images--giving attention to word connotations, lexical absence, structural oppositions, honorifics, and other linguistic elements. One of the main semiotic choices examined here is suppression (lexical absence), where certain terms are expected, but absent. It is important to examine what has been suppressed and how and what ideological (re)enforcements are at work. The goal of CDA is to demonstrate the power behind dominant discourses and the way these then engender other social discourses (Ruiz 2009:10-11). To keep it at the sociological level, linking discourse to the broader social context, it is important to understand discourse as a social product (Ruiz 2009).

#### FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

To take this examination a step further, the critical discourse analysis may carry feminist underpinnings as well. Linguist Michelle Lazer (2007:142), explains feminist discourse analysis as a “political perspective on gender, concerned with demystifying the



interrelationships of gender, power and ideology in discourse.” Feminist critical discourse analysis, according to Lazer (2007:141), is at the “nexus of critical discourse analysis and feminist studies,” and that it aims to advance “rich and nuanced analyses of the complex working of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining hierarchically gendered social orders.” The alliance of CDA and feminism can create a powerful political critique for action (Lazer 2007:144).

With the ability to regulate, build, and maintain various ideas and values in a society, language can also be used to legitimize particular social practices. In other words, language has the ability to produce and reproduce social life. This makes it critical to question what kind of social life is being created by texts and images and what types of inequalities and/or interests are being generated, reinforced, and legitimized thereof (Machin and Mayr 2012).

## SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the methodological framework utilized in this dissertation. This framework includes comparative-historical methodology and two forms of discourse analysis (critical and critical feminist). These frameworks utilize historical narratives. Using reports and news articles, I trace this historical narrative and its sources, both descriptively and critically. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this study does not focus on intersectionality of violence in race, class, gender, and nation.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA AND METHODS

As Katie MacMillan (2005:7) points out, there is no single approach to discourse analyses. Quantitative methods can be used to count lexical items, while qualitative methods are used to examine how language works by focusing on its use in particular context. Furthermore, “deep qualitative analysis on a smaller selection of data will generally yield much more insight” (MacMillan 2005:7). In order to gain a richer insight into this phenomenon, I limited the number of news sites and articles in the final analysis. The goal in the latter two case studies is to show *how* the master narrative is formed and works in this particular context using various discursive strategies and the way in which news media frames sexual violence against women as isolated incidents, removing the social context.

Since these are three different case studies, some of the methods vary slightly. The second and third studies utilize the same methods and sampling techniques. However, the first study adds comparative-historical methods. The bulk of the data for all three of these cases come from news reports and governmental statistics and reports. Given the tripartite format of this dissertation, it was more suitable for the organizational structure to differ from traditional dissertations. The first case study differs from the latter two case studies as it utilizes comparative-historical methods and takes an integrated approach, whereas the literature and methods are intertwined with the findings. Thus, the

bulk of the methodological layout can be found within the case study. Since case studies one and two utilize the exact same sampling techniques and coding process, I have expanded those sections here, while going into greater detail about their methodological nuances (e.g. data) in their respective sections.

## THE SAMPLING PROCESS

Given my objective to explain the “how” of the phenomenon, I utilized a “theoretical sampling strategy”. It is a “method of data collection based on concepts/themes derived from data. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data...that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts” (Corbin and Strauss 2008:143). Theoretical sampling takes a responsive approach where it is responsive to the data as opposed to being established before the research. In this way, according to methodologists Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (2008:144), sampling becomes open and flexible. Continuing, “concepts are derived during data analysis and questions about those concepts drive the next round of data collection”. As opposed to waiting until all the data is collected, in this sampling strategy “concepts are derived during data analysis and questions about those concepts drive the next round of data collection” (Corbin and Strauss 2008:144). This establishes the capacity to uncover phenomena, concepts and their various facets and dimension in depth, rather than a closed search that attempts to test/verify hypotheses. (Corbin and Strauss 2008:144).

Using this sampling technique allows researchers to uncover phenomena and their dimensions in depth, rather than attempting to test or verify potentially trivial hypotheses

about those phenomena (Corbin and Strauss 2008:144). Consistency and systematic approaches then take on a different meaning for this type of research. As the reader will see below, consistency does not tend to be a problem as the narratives generally show a form of consistency among themselves. In this case, for example, the “basic script” (Corbin and Strauss 2008:148) is “I feared for my life” though the details may be different in various iterations.

## THE CODING PROCESS

The coding process, in some ways, resembles the theoretical approach. Similar to theoretical sampling, open coding allows the data and the interpretation of the data to be guided by the analysis as opposed to pre-established notions and hypotheses (Corbin and Strauss 2008:160). The brainstorming character of this coding process expands the possibilities of where the data may go. Conceptualization may also be enhanced as the high level of abstract thinking required in this coding process could potentially yield more discovery and “not only reduces the amount of data the research has to work with, but at the same time provides a language for talking about the data” (Corbin and Strauss 2008:160).

Following Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) outline, this coding process has both lower-level concepts, which can be explanatory concepts that provide details, and higher-level concepts, which are lower-level concepts grouped together that share characteristics (Corbin and Strauss 2008:159). For example, in the third case study, a higher-level concept could be “social problem” while a lower-level concept could be “increasing incidents”. The higher-level concept of “social problem” could be applied to each event,

while the lower-level concept “increasing incidents” (a word connotation that may imply a social problem at hand) may be specific to one article.

## CASE STUDY 1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Lange (2013:21) defines within-case methods (also referred to as case study methods) as “a category of methods used in the social sciences that offer insight into the determinants of a particular phenomenon for a particular case—analyzing the processes and characteristics of the case.” Causal narrative is a type of within-case method that describes processes and explores casual determinants (Lange 2013:4). Within-case methods tend to be descriptive and ideographic, meant to describe what happens in particular instances and to explore the causes of one particular social phenomenon on one particular setting; insights are not meant to apply to all cases but nonetheless have the potential to produce insights that can be applied to additional cases” (Lange 2013:41).

There are primary and secondary within-case methods. The primary within-case methods are often used as data producing methods. They precede secondary within-case methods, which are ultimately used to analyze the data (Lange 2013). The secondary method used for this study is causal narrative. Secondary within-case methods has no formal methodological processes, but simply “compiles evidence, assesses it, and presents a sequential causal account” (Lange 2013:43). This process tends to be non-linear. The narrative is understood as a “sequential account—or story—of an event or series of events which organizes material chronologically to provide an overview of either what happened or the characteristics of some other social phenomena” (Lange 2013:44). The data used in comparative-historical analysis are often secondary sources.

The primary methods used here include historical narrative supplemented by internal comparison. Historical narrative does not explore causes of phenomena, but is instead used for descriptive purposes and to subsequently analyze how the particular phenomenon is constitutive of or constituted by other phenomena (Lange 2013). Internal comparison compares subcomponents of the whole and/or compares the whole to itself at different points of time mainly for ideographic insight. This helps to see and understand how a case has changed over time and outlines potential causes of that change (Lange 2013).

Critical to within-case methods, especially in this study, are inter-case relationships. Though the name of the method gives the impression that these phenomena are studied in isolation, they have the capacity to analyze the relationships cases may have with one another and in turn, the impact those relationships have on other cases. As Lange (2013:79) notes, it is rare for cases to be completely isolated from one another because inter-case relations have wide ranging effects on the cases. For example, weapons developed by Combined Tactical System used by police in Gaza are also used by militarized police in U.S. cities that experienced Black uprising after the shooting death of Michael Brown.

## CASE STUDY 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Another contribution to this, however, could be the lack of textual analysis in disciplines like sociology. Textual analysis is critical, especially for sociology because it has a greater capacity to examine social processes as they occur (Fairclough 1995:186). This temporal aspect, I believe, is critical to sociology as a whole, although it is generally

comparative-historical sociologists who tend to focus on large structures and central processes. Speaking of the historical aspect as part of the very roots of sociology, Theda Skocpol (1984:1) notes that the main characteristics of historical sociology (read sociology) are inquiries concerning social structures, *processes over time*, the "interplay of meaningful actions and structural context," and highlights of the "particular and varying features of specific kinds of social structures and patterns of change" (Skocpol 1984:1). She asserts that the task of the historical sociologist is to "analyze the relationships between these epochal processes and to probe their consequences for forms of group action" and for problem-oriented scholars to make sense of "historical patterns, using in the process whatever theoretical resources seem useful and valid" (Skocpol 1984:16-17).

If we understand that language is constitutive of and constituted by social life, and, if we are to accept the argument that text analysis is more capable than other methods at understanding sociocultural processes as they occur, then it seems critical for sociology to be more inclusive of textual analysis as a major method of study. The (critical) study of language can be useful for micro, meso, and macro levels of research. The method is also well-suited for studies at various scales (nation-state, regional, global), which focus on "the arenas in which political, economic, and social processes and practices are imagined and investigated as occurring," (Cohen and Frazier 2014:254). Discourse analysis is of great value when examining phenomena occurring in a particular temporality or across various epochs. It has the potential to demonstrate how discourse is used by ideologues to shift thinking and imaginings along with other phenomena. More

importantly, it has the unique potential to see these processes in the course of their occurrences.

Scholars utilizing CDA view language as a social practice that is connected to our actions and the construction of society. Central to this view is exploring how language naturalizes world-views, giving them a taken-for-granted foundation. In other words, “[t]hrough language, certain kinds of practices, ideas, values, and identities are promoted and naturalized” (Machin and Mayr 2012:3). CDA links language, power, and ideology and also tends to have an orientation towards social change and political intervention, avoiding distorted understandings of what it means to be objective. It also looks at how ideological elements seek to shape events, persons, and processes in certain ways. For example, when news reporters/commentators utilize a gender-neutral linguistic strategy to describe instances of violence or homicide against women, it hides the masculine character of such violence through the appearance of being neutral. Whether this is an ideological goal or not, it blinds readers and viewers to finding more precise solutions.

Using high-profile cases, I gathered newspaper articles, press releases, and court transcripts and testimonies to examine the comments, discussions and interviews of the offending officers and others involved (e.g. officers, spokespersons, judges, jurors). After deciding on the particular cases, I searched for the initial news reports that included direct quotes from the parties involved. Political tendencies were not taken into account when selecting the news articles. While each case utilized one primary article, supplemental articles were also used to extend the analysis. Once the selection process was completed, I performed repeated readings of each article and coded them accordingly. After the



initial coding, I conducted thematic coding, which came to generate categories of “blame avoidance” and “discourse” that make up the master narrative.

The cases sampled here tended to be found in various news outlets at the time of collection, which allowed me to gather as much information as possible and to cross-examine that information. In addition, as high-profile cases, these cases were assumed to be more familiar to the readers, which may help in reading and understanding the arguments made.

The coding process, in some ways, resembles the theoretical approach. Like theoretical sampling, open coding avoids preconceived notions and expectations of findings. Instead, the data and interpretation of the data guide the analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2008:160). Given the level of abstractions required (or learned) in thinking with open coding, the possibilities and potential of the data are multifarious. This brainstorming process lays a path for more carefully examined and thought-out conceptualization, which in turn “not only reduces the amount of data the research has to work with, but at the same time provides a language for talking about the data” (Corbin and Strauss 2008:160).

Within this coding process there are lower-level concepts, which can be explanatory concepts that fill in or provide details, and also higher-level concepts, which are lower-level concepts grouped together that share similar characteristics that describe concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2008:159). For example, a higher-level concept could be “blame avoidance” while a lower-level concept could be “I thought he had a gun”. The higher-level concept of “blame avoidance” could be applied to each situation, while the

lower-level concept “I thought he had a gun” (a particular technique for blame avoidance) may be specific to one case.

I began coding after reading the very first news article included in the analysis. However, other news articles that covered related topics like the death of Trayvon Martin, were also coded (more for brainstorming than analysis). For each article, I performed line-by-line coding and then coded the codes in order to create high-level concepts or categories. Following that, I separately created categories based on each technique of blame avoidance. Once all the articles were coded, I matched the cases to their respective strategy of blame avoidance. The open coding was used for uncovering the master narrative, while the categories established from the framework were used to reveal the blame avoidance. These cases are not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

### CASE STUDY 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A pilot study was conducted earlier to evaluate the design of this study. In it I utilized Access World News to mine articles concerning incidents of violence against women reported as domestic violence from the most frequently viewed news sources. As news tends to have partisan values, both liberal news outlets (five) and conservative news media sites (four) were selected. To avoid bias in sampling, every article reporting all incidents were chosen. Once I obtained all of the articles, I placed them into two separate word documents: one for left-wing news sites and the other for right-wing. Once these were placed, I carried out repeated readings, as discussed by Gaberiel Ignatow and Rada Mihalcea (2017). Sites were chosen from the top of the list to the bottom, skipping sites that were not available in the database. Sites were also skipped if they were special

interest sites that catered to specific news, for example, Politico and Amnesty International. The timeframe was filtered for any time after January 1, 2010. Neither liberal or conservative news site contextualized the reported domestic violence incidents in a way that revealed the social epidemic aspect of the issue. Furthermore, word count/frequency showed that many of the news articles, as they concerned celebrities, used fewer words to discuss the actual domestic violence incident. Instead, they detailed other dimensions of the celebrity's life.

In light of the preliminary findings, which showed no notable difference between liberal and conservative news in this respect, the final analysis was conducted irrespective of sites' political leanings. Like other methodologies, there are various approach to discourse analyses (MacMillan 2005:7). While quantitative methods can be used to count lexical items, as often is the case in textual analysis, qualitative methods are used to examine how language works, by focusing on its use in particular context. Moreover, "deep qualitative analysis on a smaller selection of data will generally yield much more insight" (MacMillan 2005:7). With the objective being obtaining a richer insight into the phenomenon, I limited the number of news sites and articles in the final analysis. The reader should keep in mind that the goal here is to show "how" descaling works in the context, using the above-mentioned discursive strategies.

To examine whether or not and how this descaling issue is prevalent in reports on violence against women, the reporting of mass shootings is examined to explore the differences in reporting. The Aurora Theater Shooting in 2012, The Umpqua Community College shooting of 2015, and the San Bernardino Shooting at the close of 2015 are

discussed among mass shootings. The Steubenville High School Rape of 2012 and Congressional Aid Rape of 2012 are analyzed for their reporting of violence against women. Reports came from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The cases sampled here were generally seen as high-profile (shooting) cases, these cases were assumed to be more familiar to the readers, which may help in reading and understanding the arguments. The congressional aid sexual assault case was selected because it involved someone who had some form of legitimized power, while the Steubenville case was chosen as a high-profile case. While these five cases serve as the primary data sources, other cases were utilized for supporting evidence. For each case, the initial report was used for this analysis. Copying each article into a word document, I coded each article line-by-line and then again thematically. After the general coding, I utilized the critical discourse analytical approach outlined by David Machin and Andrea Mayr (2012) to conduct a third level of coding for each article by the various discursive strategies outlined in the framework.

Since the goal here is to explain the “how” of the phenomenon, I utilized the above-mentioned theoretical sampling strategy (Corbin and Strauss 2008). The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data...that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts” (Corbin and Strauss 2008:143). Consistency and the systematic nature of this type of sampling is understood differently than other types of data collection. As readers will discover below, consistency does not tend to be an issue as the discursive strategies tend to show some sort of consistency. In this case, what

Corbin and Strauss (2008:148) call the “basic script” would be “this is an isolated incident” although the details may be different. To better understand this basic script and the varying details, understanding the coding process helps.

I began coding at the very onset of reading the very first news article. For each article, I performed line-by-line coding and then categorical codes in order to create high-level concepts or categories. After that, I separately created categories based on discursive strategies outlined by Machin and Mayr (2012). Once all the articles were coded using line-by-line, categorical coding, and then coded a third time using the discursive strategies, I matched the categorical or high-level codes with each strategy. The open coding (line-by-line and categorical) was utilized generally to see where the data went, while the coding categories established from Machin and Mayr’s (2012) outline were used to reveal the use of discursive strategies and their potential consequences.

## CHAPTER V

### CHI-RAQ: WHEN THE CITY BECOMES A TECHNOLOGY OF WAR

*Police sirens, everyday  
People dyin', everyday  
Mamas cryin', everyday  
Fathers tryin', everyday  
Tryin' to get my head straight  
This the city of Chi-Raq, get your bed made...  
And y'all mad cause I don't call it Chicago  
But I don't live in no fuckin' Chicago, boy I live in Chi-Raq  
—Nick Cannon, Pray for My City*

#### INTRODUCTION

The following case studies intend to thematically integrate issues of race, class, and gender as they relate to violence. In doing so, each case study takes a different but interconnected route. Starting with theory, the first case study, *Chi-Raq: When the City Itself Becomes a Technology of War*, relies upon Saskia Sassen's (2010b) theoretical arguments of territory, authority, and rights. Ideas concerning militarized police forces and unarmed civilians in an asymmetric war are applied and discussed. The city of Chicago is used as a case to frame the extended state's hegemonic power over people of color as an example of asymmetric warfare, what Sassen (2010b:36) describes as war "between a conventional and unconventional forces on urban terrain and armed insurgents". To examine this phenomenon, I apply various concepts including discursive strategies, substantive citizenship, and symbolic space/boundaries from a critical transnational feminist perspective. While outlining the asymmetric war in Chicago, I

argue that this asymmetrical warfare between the state and marginalized groups is a global formation that can be found in various locales. To do this, I conclude this case study with parallels and connections between Chicago and Palestine. While there are various ways in which the city becomes a technology of war, the focus in this case is primarily on law-enforcement, however, to paint a larger picture, I also discuss other socio-historic tools used by the state including policy, geography, and the privatization of public services. That said, a large number of the sources used here come directly from nonacademic sources, including news media and governmental websites. Given the theoretical nature of this case study, those sources were gathered through theoretical sampling for their examination.

Various media sources have brought components of this asymmetric war to light. Four considerations are noteworthy: First, it is important to frame these issues within the global context for a fuller understanding. Second, while these issues may seem commonplace or explicit, academia tends to have trouble evaluating them. Third, frameworks for examining these phenomena help us analyze their processes, histories, and potential consequences. Finally, academia, like news media, holds a degree of power in the legitimation process. “Chi-Raq,” then, as a sociological concept, is not as easily cast, for it looks like an illegitimate comparison to nation-state war, particularly the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

## THE PARTICULARS IN THE GLOBAL

Many scholars in global studies are increasingly decentering the nation-state analytically for a fuller understanding of global processes and structures (Sassen 2007).

Furthermore, they are de-stabilizing and reconfiguring traditional categories and meanings (Kahn 2014). Similarly, this case study decenters the nation-state and destabilizes the traditional definition of war as armed conflict between nation-states. The term “Chi-Raq” itself destabilizes these taken-for-granted categories.

Sassen (2010a:1) argues that there are multiple ways of examining the global inside the national. One way is to localize “global dynamics inside the national.” The second way “consists of formations which although global are articulated with particular actors, cultures, or projects;” and finally, to denationalize the national. This study combines these methods. On one hand, I argue that asymmetric war (along state-sanctioned violence itself) is a global phenomenon that is articulated in various societies. Sassen (2010b) gives the examples of Gaza and Mumbai. On the other hand, I denationalize the national with respects to what we often consider as war. That is, war here is not just a metaphor used to compare the events happening in Chicago and other cities, but rather that these are in fact *wars*, albeit unconventional. War “represents a social and political device rooted in national and ideological protection, expansion, nationalism, confronting socially constructed others” (Cochran 2015:15) and is usually continually physical and violent. This very well can be applied to Chicago and other U.S. cities.

Conjuring globalization to underline historical change or contemporary dynamics helps us understand events and change as “consequences of globalized power relations and social structures” (Robinson 2015:235). This does not mean, however, that these events and changes are happening everywhere in the world or in similar ways. The



transformation of each country is conditioned by its own socio-cultural context and it has its own experience under globalization. What is important is its position in and relationship to the global processes (Robinson 2015). However, we can still draw patterns such as asymmetric war, which allow us to examine country-specific manifestations of global processes. In order to understand the global society, we must understand concrete regions and their histories— “a part of a totality, in its relation to that totality” (Robinson 2015:235).

Rachel Harvey (2014) provides a conceptual rubric for identifying the particular-global relationship and its core characteristics. This framework comprises three analytical vantage points: global in the particular, which focuses on how particular sociocultural processes/phenomena are transformed by the global; particular in the global, which draws attention to how the particular plays a role in the creation and functioning of the global; and global-particular, which looks at the concealment of particularities that play a role in the global (Harvey 2014). Each of these vantage points can be aligned with the various perspectives/waves or definitions of globalization.

#### **BREAKING THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONTRACT: TRANSNATIONALISM**

For this case to be understood properly, breaking the “epistemological contract” is necessary, for example, investigating the parallels between illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestine, and historical redlining and gentrification in the U.S. Again, this is not an effort to compare them as is often the case with discussing the situations of different groups or at different historical moments. Instead, the goal here is to understand the interconnections between these groups’ comparable forms of oppression and struggle,

revealing the global formations that may vary in different geographical locations, or the particulars in the global.

Transnational research emphasizes interactions and relationships between places, as it seeks to move beyond the analytical limitations of research focused on single sites bounded within the nation-state”. It asks “how the regimes of governance and economics that connect these various subjects and their spaces produce particular practices and experiences” (Silvey 2010:198). It studies struggles around the world and links them. This case study attempts to build “connectivity not only to upset the cartographic rules” that positions these struggles as unrelated, but also “to redraw and therefore reiterate through practice the connectivity of those spaces and ultimately of the political struggles that make that connectivity possible” (Alexander and Mohanty 2010:39). The connectivity is applied to social spaces and social constructions (e.g. race, class, state) as well. Social constructions need to be brought into ideological and geographical proximity of each other by foregrounding practices common to each (Alexander and Mohanty 2010). In this way one could understand the social organization of the particular issues as they are practiced by various institutions and “conceive of the transnational across a wide range of ideological, political, economic, and discursive practices straddling multiple temporalities and multiple interests” (Alexander and Mohanty 2010:37). These temporal and socio-geographical connections help reveal the connection between struggles.

## DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

One component of asymmetric wars is the States’ power in mass media and their capacity to control the discourse and thus influence perception, beliefs, values, and

behavior. In the 2015 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama stated “there wasn’t a liberal America or a conservative America; a black America or a white America—but a United States of America” (Obama 2015). This harkens back to a previous speech and what many believed was the guiding post for voters in his 2008 election. Although 84 Blacks had been killed by the police only within those 20 short days prior to this speech (The Guardian), Obama insisted, “I still believe that we are one people. I still believe that together, we can do great things, even when the odds are long” (Obama 2015) ignoring the qualitative differences between the different worlds.

The aim of this study is not to make claims against racial and other forms of solidarity or to continue the detrimental dichotomy of ‘us versus them’. Part of the goal here is to demonstrate that there is a form of war in which Blacks and other people of color find themselves as casualties. Obama’s abuse of discursive power in the lines above does not simply misinterpret what scholars, activists, writers, and family members of the casualties were referring to when speaking of a “Black America.” As a discursive strategy, it actively discourages calls for racial solidarity by advocating the “we are all one,” a quasi-argumentative shortcut whereby the “plausibility of which can be relatively easily questioned” (Hansson 2015:300). As the opening lyrics of this chapter pronounce, many people may live in the same physical territory, but authority and rights create a different lived experience for some groups that effectively create boundaries that turn one place into many. One of the spaces is likely the space into which President Trump threatened to “send in the feds” (Ford 2017). Another space could be what President

Trump also called the “great city” (Bosman and Davey 2017)—both spaces refer to Chicago.

Obama’s comments point to another issue. Race plays a strong role in the lives of women and people of different socio-economic strata, but there is no claim here that Blackness is a unitary experience. With higher social status and social class, Obama’s experience may be quite different from that of “Chi-Raq” residents. Though, as the 2009 Henry Louis Gates incident revealed, there are some strong features of race that stretch across the board. The goal of this chapter is to outline the asymmetrical war between people of color and the state apparatus.

These discursive strategies have also been used historically. What is claimed to be done in pursuits of national security tends to be a source of urban insecurity. Defining the Black Panther party as an “extremist organization” that “advocated the use of violence and guerilla tactics to overthrow the U.S. government,” and as “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country,” the FBI helped create urban insecurity, making way for the rise of urban gangs as the government violently countered the Black Liberation Movement, jailing and killing Black leaders. As Sassen (2010b:38) points out, the conventional side can engage in various types of war activities including torture and assassinations of leaders.

Finally, as will be shown in the next case study, police officers and state officials tend to use discursive strategies, namely the narrative “I feared for my life,” to reinforce racist ideology that justifies their shooting/killing of (unarmed) people of color (or least avoids blame) while simultaneously evoking empathy from the public, jurors, and judges.

## SYMBOLIC SPACE AND BOUNDARIES

A few other concepts that also help in this discussion include (forced) urbanization, substantive citizenship, symbolic resources, and boundaries--all of which make it possible for asymmetric war. One of the features Sassen (2010b) explicate is the forced urbanization, which involves the expulsion of the “others” and defined along ethnic and other lines. Again, while Sassen (2010b) outlines this feature in terms of ethnic cleansing in places such as Baghdad, gentrification has become commonplace in U.S. cities. Writing in *The Guardian*, Rebecca Solnit (2016), connected gentrification to a police killing that occurred in San Francisco this year. In that connection she simultaneously linked the murder to the white newcomers’ view of the victim, Alex Nieto, as a “menacing intruder”. Similar to the other shooting cases, police and vigilantes evoke a master narrative claiming to have feared for their lives. This so-called fear “justified” the 14 shots piercing Nieto, including 5 shots after he had already fallen onto the pavement (Solnit 2016). Of course ethnic cleansing entails more than an individual person and is accompanied with socio-political, economic, and ideological means of oppression.

Evelyn Nakano-Glenn (2011) developed a sociological concept that is useful here--substantive citizenship--which concerns a sense of belonging and its recognition by community members through daily interactions. Substantive Citizenship is not only a matter of legal status, but also a matter of belonging and community recognition. Community members tend to draw boundaries of citizenship defining who is entitled to three defining rights (civil, legal, social) by granting or withholding recognition (Nakano-

Glenn 2011). This withholding assists in confronting those socially constructed “others”. Thus, even with legal status, nationality or community membership can be granted to some and refused to “others” even while both live in the same community. Once we examine substantive citizenship, a form of citizenship that could be threatened or revoked given the policing conditions, we can gain insight into the opening lyrics, “I don’t live in no fuckin’ Chicago, boy, I live in Chi-Raq” (Cannon 2015).

The police are also capable of utilizing boundaries and recognizing or withdrawing substantive citizenship. An investigation by the Department of Justice (DOJ) reported on the allegations of police officers using unlawful tactics to gather information. To gather information on gang activity officers would allegedly arrest or detain individuals, refusing to release them until they provide information. Capitalizing on the substantive citizenship practices within Chi-Raq, they would take a detainee to a rival gang neighborhood and either leave them there or display the person to rival gang members, which put the person’s life in harm’s way (DOJ 2017). In gang territories, beyond rights, community membership can be granted or refused. Refusal can sometimes mean death. While gangs may not be an arena for discussing legal rights, they may have the power to determine what members and outsiders can and cannot do. The police officers use boundaries, in this case gang territory and authority, as a policing strategy in these lower class communities of color. These inter-boundaries within Chi-Raq are utilized by police officers as a tool within this asymmetric war that can often lead to more casualties even if not directly by police hands.

Symbolic resources are conceptual distinctions made by individuals to "categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont and Molnar 2002:168). Once categorized into groups, sentiments of similarity and membership are generated within the groups. Similarly, there are social boundaries, defined by Michèle Lamont and Virag Molnar (2002:168) as "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial), and social opportunities". In some cases, symbolic boundaries are conditions for social boundaries, though not the only conditions. Boundaries, as one of the most used thinking tools, recognizes relationality, a fundamental notion that underlines various social phenomena, institutions and locations (Lamont and Molnar 2002:169). Substantive citizenship, symbolic resources, and social boundaries parallel what Sassen (2008) discusses as territory, authority, and rights. These symbolic and social boundaries make it possible for asymmetric war to be waged. In the case of Chicago and other U.S. cities fraught with racist police brutality, militarized police have clear visions and direction on whom to leave alone, whom to capture as prisoners of war, and whom to kill.

#### THE RACIST FORMATION OF GEOGRAPHY

Chicago is the largest city in Illinois and the largest metropolitan area in the U.S. Chicago has about 9.5 million residents (2.7 million of those within the city limits). Racially, Chicago is diverse with 33% Blacks, 32% white, 29% Latinx, and 8% Asian and/or multi-racial groups (DOJ 2017). The median household income in Chicago is below the national average at \$48,522 with 22% of the city living below the federal poverty line and 5.5% unemployed. Whites at \$61,500 have more than double the

average household income of Blacks (\$30,400). Compared to white residents, Black and Latinx Chicagoans are disproportionately poor with about 35% Black, 25% Latinx, and less than 11% white living below the poverty line.

Sassen (2010b:33) notes that “cities have long been sites for conflicts wars, racisms, religious hatreds, expulsions of the poor. And yet, where national states have historically responded by militarizing conflict, cities have tended to triage conflict through commerce and civic activity.” Sassen (2010b) argues that cities are losing this capacity and are increasingly becoming sites of asymmetric war and urban violence. Residential segregation plays a strong role in abetting this war. As separate does not tend to include equals, pro-segregation practices in Chicago help maintain boundaries enforced by policy and discriminatory housing practices. These are connected to one another. It is common, for example, for law-enforcement to use zip code data to determine their policing strategies. The zip codes with the largest police presence also tend to be where poverty is concentrated, and, concentrated poverty tends to correspond to segregated neighborhoods. This becomes even more critical as economic segregation in Chicago increased between 2000 and 2010 (Metropolitan Planning Council 2017).

The importance of examining the racist formation of geography becomes clearer once we look at the area-specific findings. The FBI report’s findings in the investigation of the Chicago Police Department identified these “systemic” issues particularly in Chicago’s Westside and Southside in predominately Black and Brown neighborhoods. This geographical discrepancy is part of what separates Chicago, Illinois from Chi-Raq,



illustrating the institutional racism within the law-enforcement and the abuse of substantive citizenship.

## THE RACIST FORMATION OF LAW-ENFORCEMENT

Asymmetric war is “partial, intermittent and lacks clear endings” (Sassen 2010b:36), which can be observed when looking at the history of the U.S. legal system. The public killings and mass incarceration of people of color by law enforcement is not new. Slavery, convicting-leasing, Jim Crow and now the New Jim Crow demonstrate this trend. Each one of these systems of oppression “appear to die, but then are reborn in new form, tailored to the needs and constraints of the time” (M. Alexander 2012:21-22). The emergence of each system appears sudden, however, as Michelle Alexander (2012:22) points out, “seeds are planted long before each new institution begins to grow”.

The Chicago Police Department is the second largest municipal police department in the U.S. Soon after Chicago was authorized in January 1835 to established its own police force, the department was created in August of the same year. Once Chicago was incorporated as a city in 1837, the CPD quickly expanded into the city with a “small collection of officers, constables, and part-time night watchmen to serve and protect” (Chicago Police Department 2017). The first Black officer to join the department occurred about 36 years later and the first Black Superintendent was appointed nearly 100 years later in 1983; the first Latinx Superintendent was sworn in in 1992. In 1886, the Haymarket Riot, which started as an anarchist demonstration, occurred and is referred to as the most “devastating day in Chicago Police Department history” killing 8 officers

and wounding 59 (Chicago Police Department 2017). The first woman (along with 9 others) joined the department in August 1913 and the first Black woman joined in 1918.

Chicago is known for its high rates of crime and violence. There were 24,663 violent crimes reported in 2015. The majority were aggravated assaults followed by 9,649 robberies, and 478 homicides. In 2016, the number of homicides jumped to 762, which is said to be the “largest single-year increase in the last 25 years among five most populous U.S. cities” (DOJ 2017:17). The city of Chicago, like many high-density urbanized places, tend to have higher crime rates and have troubled relations with what criminologists identify as four sources of crime: inequality, conditions of prisons and their overuse, guns, and current drug policy.

We have maintained that the current law enforcement system emerged out of the racist, classist, and sexist needs of the capitalist class. In 1845, the establishment of a formal police force was ratified, subsequent of the New York Police Department (NYPD), which replaced the previous system of watchmen, for-hire mercenary-like groups sanctioned by the government to enforce laws. Constant slave insurrections were occurring in the U.S. South, while the New England region witnessed riots by lower-class whites in an effort to gain labor rights such as a reduced workday from 16 hours to 10 hours. Due to this collective action in both areas, the government needed more law-enforcers and around-the-clock enforcement. Thus, the establishment of the formal law-enforcement system we know today is rooted in racism, an attempt to suppress Black slave insurrections, and classism, an effort to repress the labor demands of lower-class whites. Today, law-enforcement works in a similar fashion, as the legal apparatus of the

capitalist class did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Dahrendorf's (1968) theory of inequality argues, people are free and equal before the law, but not after, and inequality emerges through the use of the sanctioning (legal) system. Sara Wakefield and Christopher Uggen (2010) reveal how racist or "selective" mass incarceration works as a loco motive of stratification and impacts other forms of stratification. Women are currently being arrested at twice the rate of men. Wakefield and Uggen (2010:391) note the enormous race and social class disparities in incarceration rates. Drawing on Loïc Wacquant, they describe the racial character of mass incarceration as being driven "by the desire to manage dispossessed and dishonored groups" (Wakefield and Uggen 2010:391). Prisons have the capacity to operate as powerhouses that houses those with the least capitals generating and reinforcing a racialized stratification. Following changes in the political economy, systems of Black oppression also take different forms, giving birth to their successors. As Michelle Alexander (2010) noted, "preservation through transformation." After slavery, the "convicting leasing" emerged, which was followed by the Jim Crow era. Emerging from the old Jim Crow was the current system of racialized mass incarceration otherwise known as the New Jim Crow (Alexander 2010). The socio-historical conditions that beget current law-enforcement plays a role in facilitating the current asymmetric war and its lack of a clear ending.

According to Sassen (2010b:33), "the dense and conflictive spaces of cities overwhelmed by inequality and injustice can become the sites for a variety of secondary, more anomic types of conflicts arising from drug wars...". In 2014, Business Insider (Kelley 2014) and other news media reported that between 2000 and 2012 the U.S.

government struck a deal with the Sinaloa drug cartel that allowed them to smuggle “billions of dollars of drugs” (Kelley 2014) into major U.S. cities. Sinaloa, according to the report, is responsible for 80% of the heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and meth in the city of Chicago (Kelley 2013) and also controls nearly the entire drug market in the U.S. Though the War on Drugs is just one part of this asymmetric war, law-enforcement, as a conventional state-sanctioned force, and Black civilians as an unconventional force lays the foundation for Chicago and other cities to become a technology of war. Furthermore, the consequences of the War on Drugs, including mass incarceration of (poor) people of color, turn state and private correctional facilities into war camps, making (poor) people of color prisoners of war. The continuation of this historical struggle between people of color and law-enforcement highlights the nature of asymmetric war as partial, intermittent and lacking a clear ending, as Sassen (2010b) noted.

The Department of Justice investigation (DOJ 2017) of the Chicago Police Department that began in December 2015, found a “pattern or practice of unconstitutional force is largely attributable to deficiencies in its accountability systems and in how it investigates uses of force, responds to allegations of misconduct, trains and supervises officers, and collects and reports data on officer use of force.” The report went on to state that community-oriented policing strategies were lacking as well. Also missing was support for officer wellness and safety, which contributed to these patterns of unconstitutional use of force (DOJ 2017). The report also mentioned “serious concerns about the prevalence of racially discriminatory conduct by some CPD officers and the degree to which that conduct is tolerated and in some respects caused by deficiencies in

CPD's systems of training, supervision and accountability." These practices of unreasonable force is most present in Black, Latinx and Arab neighborhoods revealing a "disproportionality of illegal and unconstitutional patterns of force on minority communities" (DOJ 2017).

Other findings included more documented patterns of the use of force including unreasonable deadly force. These practices/patterns included: shooting at fleeing suspects who presented no immediate threat; shooting at vehicles without justification; using less-lethal force including Tasers, when no threat was present; using force to retaliate against and punish individuals; and using excessive force against juveniles (DOJ 2017). Other issues the report mentioned related to issues such as failing to effectively deescalate situations or to use crisis intervention techniques to reduce the need for force; employing tactics that unnecessarily endanger officers and result in avoidable shootings and other uses of force; and failing to accurately document and meaningfully review officers' use of force (DOJ 2017).

The majority of these cases, though required by law to be investigated, never were. The investigations that did occur is often aimed at "eliciting information favorable to the officer, and investigators do not confront officers with inconsistent physical evidence" (DOJ 2017). Another systemic deficiency found in the report is the common failure to address racist conduct. The report suggested that this issue was related to the deficiencies in CPD systems of training, supervision, and accountability and "the corrosive effect on police legitimacy of excessive force, which falls most heavily on Chicago's communities of color" (DOJ 2017). In addition to these direct attacks on

communities of color in Chicago, members from various marginalized groups, including Muslims and transgender communities, raised concerns about CPD's response to hate crimes against their communities. Thus, we can see how this practice is an indicator of the social boundaries discussed by Lamont and Molnar (2002) and generates objectified forms of social differences that is revealed in this unequal access to the CPD's service and protection.

While media attention towards police brutality is increasing, the phenomenon is quite old. In the 1980s and 90s, for example, detectives and officers "used severe interrogation tactics, such as physical force, suffocations, and electric shocks, to coerce confessions from predominantly black men living on Chicago's South and West Sides" (DOJ 2017:19). The lead detective in that series of brutality, Jon Burge, was not arrested until decades later for other charges while keeping his CPD pension. He served 4.5 years in prison (DOJ 2017:19). Once this received media attention, the other officers in that particular unit were arrested on charges of robbery and kidnapping because they "improperly stopped and searched [B]lack and Latino community members and seized their cash and other property" (DOJ 2017:19), a common trend today known as civic forfeiture.

These realities are still present, as Rahm Emmanuel's task force investigating CPD wrote, "C.P.D.'s own data gives validity to the widely held belief the police have no regard for the sanctity of life when it comes to people of color" (Davey and Smith 2016). Homan Square, an "off-the-books" interrogation warehouse in Chicago was used as over 7,000 people disappeared. Between August 2004 and June 2015, 6,000 of those held at

this facility were Black (The Guardian). Overall, 11.8% of the detainees in Homan Square were Latinx, 82.2% Black, and 5.5% white. This unofficial detention center often denied detainees their phone calls and access to an attorney, and failed to generate public records of those detained. Other documents reveal that Chicago police used a degree of violence as well, from Tasers to baton strikes that led to hospitalization.

#### ASYMMETRIC WARFARE AS A GLOBAL FORMATION

The connections (not comparisons) made here are through the law-enforcement regimes and government policy in relation to the colonial, neocolonial, and imperial practices on different geographical scales (Alexander and Mohanty 2010). Thus, it is important to compare issues/processes such as U.S. gentrification and redlining, to cross broader issues like apartheid in Gaza. Although situated in particular locales in varying forms and degrees, these are global formations, in that they do not belong to any particular nation-state.

Some of the major goals of transnational research with a critical transnational praxis lens, include emphases on the interactions and relationships between places, moving beyond the analytical limitations of individual sites, revealing connectivity between spaces and the political struggles, and understanding the social organization of their respective phenomena through their institutional manifestations and ideological, political, economic, and discursive practices across various temporalities and socio-geographical locations. Using this transnational approach, I aim to reveal the way asymmetric warfare can be seen as a global (rather than simply local or inter-state) formation.

Drawing on Angela Davis's (2016) assertion that MLK's Riverside Speech has remained out of circulation due to the intersections and interconnections between the anti-war campaign and the Black Liberation Movement (Davis 2016), I argue that the insistent solidarity between Blacks and Palestinians to end Black oppression and the Israeli Occupation has also been suppressed. The temporal and socio-geographical disconnection hides the collective struggle while singling out ideas of individualism evinced by such historical figures as MLK and Rosa Parks. The same rhetoric also celebrates these characters as "individuals". While these historical figures are indeed worthy of appreciation, study, and celebration, we have to examine the potential usage and meaning of this sanctification, especially as they themselves refused to be elevated through the lens of individual merit (Davis 2016).

As globalization theorists suggest, instead of focusing on territorial boundaries, we need to examine the sociospatial networks of power, at various scales (local, national, regional, global) along with their intersections and the way they configure particular societies (Castells 2009; Sassen 2010a). While the nation-state remains critical, in the network society nation-states become nodes within a network and the "social dynamics constructed around networks appears to dissolve society as a stable social form of organization" (Castells 2009:19).

As argued above, this type of war is part of a global formation that can be found in various locales. Part of this global formation stems from the increase and growth in transnational corporations, and transnational governance and their reach and power such formations possess. Subsequently, especially with the rise of network society (Castells



2009), transnational solidarity also arises. Thus, asymmetric wars that can be seen in places like Palestine and Chicago, intensified by corporate transnationalism via corporations like G4S that operate in both places, solidarity between oppressed groups in each place (e.g. Palestinians and Blacks) increases. It is important to understand the various factors and components of transnationalism and what leads to transnational solidarity. This study focuses primary on that process.

Both Blacks and Palestinians experience the racialization of crime. On one side of these asymmetric wars, we have Blacks and Palestinians who are portrayed as “terrorists” or “super-predators” while on the other side we have the police, the “heroes” that risk their lives every day to “serve and protect”. The representation of cops as heroes or veterans of dangerous jobs tends to downplay their complicity in structures of dominations. The same representational process depicts Palestinians and Blacks as potential and actual criminals. This transmits the message about whose lives matter and whose do not (Gillespie et al. 2013). These portrayals or ideological links between color and crime are reminiscent of Davis’s (2016:65) assertion that the images of “islamophobic violence is nurtured by histories of anti-black racist violence”. Beyond this racialization of crime, there has been a continual dehumanization of Blacks through politics, media, and other modes of communication (Davis 2016). Ideological links that connect Palestinians with crime (and thus needs or deserves punishment) are also present. Both Israeli and U.S. politicians frequently “describe Israel as ‘living in a tough neighborhood’ where the Iranians and Arabs are portrayed as ‘the violence blacks’ of the Middle East and Jews are perceived as the ‘peaceful white folks’” (Abunimah 2014:9).

The symbolic power held by the state makes statements like these, combined with other racist discourse more effective especially given how this symbolic power is implemented through naturalization of housing segregation practices and cognitive schemes, making it possible for such messages to evoke familiar imagery and feelings. As Ali Abunimah (2014) points out, this is why the apparently colorblind parallel between “the war on drugs” and the “war on terrorism” does not require overt bigotry but is implicitly understood as a war on Blacks and on Muslims.

One of the primary questions asked from a transnational feminist praxis perspective is how do the regimes of governance and economics that connect these various subjects produce particular practices and experiences? Global governance and economic regimes are conceptualized here as the extended state. While the U.S. state has ties with the private sphere that suppresses the Black population (e.g. private prisons), the Israeli state also has ties with private corporations like Caterpillar that demolishes Palestinian homes in order to create illegal settlements. Additional, there are connections between the U.S., Israel, and private corporations, shaping the lived experiences for Blacks in the U.S. and Palestinians in Occupied Palestine.

While the producers of Combined Tactical Systems and the manufacturers of the teargas, are private corporations, their weapons are used by the state. The extended state transnationalism exceeds merely the use of corporate weapons. Police chiefs across the U.S. (Baltimore, NYC, Ferguson, Chicago) have increasingly been sent to Israel to train (with) Israeli police forces. In 2010, Chicago law enforcement officials were sponsored by the Jewish United Fund to travel to Israel for a seminar on “intelligence-led policing

techniques and responses to critical events” (JUF 2010). These exchanges between U.S. and Israeli police are reciprocal—each learning from one another the state-sanctioned techniques of repressing Blacks and Palestinians. As former CPD chief of staff noted, CPD is “more effective operationally and tactically as a result of these two trips and the enduring partnership with our Israeli institutional and individual counterparts” (JUF 2010; Abunimah 2014:11).

As Chicago law enforcement participate in seminars and trainings, Israel’s occupation of Palestine is set up as a model for Chicago. The ties between law enforcement in Occupied Palestine and places like Chicago, Oakland, Houston, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Detroit, St. Louis, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Kansas City, and New York, demonstrate a global formation of law enforcement sometimes referred to as the “global homeland security industry” (Abunimah 2014:11; Halper 2015). Through the Israeli-American Law Enforcement Exchange Program, over a hundred U.S. law enforcement officials have been brought to Israel and 11,000 Israeli law enforcement officers have been trained in the U.S. (Abunimah 2014; JINSA 2011). This “Israelification” of U.S. policing moves beyond shared training: “former Israeli military officers have been hired to spearhead security operations at American airports and suburban shopping malls, leading to a wave of disturbing incidents of racial profiling, intimidation, and FBI interrogations of innocent, unsuspecting people” (Blumenthal 2011). As colonized territories like Gaza and the West Bank serve as “laboratories for new forms of violence and social control” (Abunimah 2014:20) these new formations get implemented in Black/Brown America.

Blacks and Palestinians endure the abuse of these policing tactics. While there is “systematic and institutionalized ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children by Israel authorities” (Abunimah 2014: 14), there is Homan Square, an off-the-books interrogation warehouse in Chicago where Blacks have been taken as prisoners. In these facilities police officers use “punches, knee strikes, elbow strikes, slaps, wrist twists, baton blows and Tasers” (The Guardian). Forced confessions, racial profiling, and solitary confinement are also experienced by both groups. In the Occupied West Bank, the conviction rate for Palestinians is 99.74% (Abunimah 2014:15). In the U.S., Blacks are convicted at higher rates than their white counterparts and face longer sentences.

Corporations like CTS along with the rapidly increasing private prisons profit from the repression and suffering of various groups of color. The corporate sphere is often directly invested in private prisons in the U.S. and settlement products in Occupied Palestine. Prison is frequently used as a tool for racist domination over both Blacks and Palestinians. While Blacks tend to comprise a disproportionately large percentage of those incarcerated in the U.S., approximately 40% of Palestinian men have been (or will be) detained by Israel (Norton 2014). Taking note of this, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) stated:

Mass imprisonment and incarceration has been a central tool of racist control in the United States. One out of every three Black men in the U.S. will be imprisoned; every 28 hours a Black person is killed by the state or someone protected by the state. Palestinians know well the use of mass imprisonment to maintain racist domination and oppression and breaking the racist structures of imprisonment is critical to our liberation movement. We salute Mumia Abu-Jamal and all of the political prisoners of the Black liberation movement in U.S. jails and call for their immediate freedom (Norton 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Decentering the nation-state and destabilizing traditional concepts of war, the case of Chicago examined here adumbrates an asymmetric war between people of color and the state. As Sassen (2010) and other scholars have argued, these types of global formations can be found and examined in particular locales. In this case, the police acts as the conventional force and people of color as the unconventional force. As an urban space, Chicago becomes a space of global governance challenges. The frontlines of this war is between law-enforcement and (poor) people of color. However, other governmental and economic issues cannot be ignored. Redlining and gentrification play a strong role in displacing Chi-Raqians and concentrating them in particular spaces. This concentration can make discriminatory police practices easier and/or more likely. The number of killings of people of color by militarized police, extensive use of surveillance, torture, the disparities in arrests rates and convictions, and other components of the criminal legal system serve as weapons or tools in this war. The urban articulation of territory, especially racial-economic segregation, is a strong part of this asymmetric war.

One of the implications here is that there is a need to locate social issues within the global context. Examining such parallels helps us gain a fuller understanding which is necessary for viable solutions, especially if such phenomena are part of a global formation. The militarization of police forces are not specific to the Chicago or the United States, but could also be seen in Palestine, Bangladesh, Mexico, and other countries across the world due to changes in global power relations. Without breaking the epistemological contract, that is, without considering the history of militarization of the

police, redlining, settlements, and gentrification, together, we risk not understanding and misunderstanding these truly global phenomena.

## CHAPTER VI

### I FEARED FOR MY LIFE: LAW ENFORCEMENT’S APPEAL TO MURDEROUS EMPATHY

*Red, white, and blue  
Here come the sirens  
Only to dance  
With the little girls on the corner  
There's a war in the streets  
Nobody speaks  
And now a boy laying on the ground  
- Hell You Talmbout (Monáe, 2013)*

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter empirically uses the concept of asymmetric war and employs critical discourse analysis to examine discursive strategies used by police officers and their spokespersons to avoid blame and invoke empathy for their deadly use of force. The focus on the case study here is primarily on the shooting of unarmed Blacks; but it also includes the murders of other people of color. Findings suggest that officers have created a master narrative, which becomes a sociological phenomenon, as opposed a to series of individual stories.

As the opening lyrics state, “there’s a war in the streets,” and this war is asymmetrical and has led to an increasing number of Black and Brown casualties. Black individuals are three times more likely to be killed by the police than their white counterparts. Todd Callais (2016) found that 33% of Black people killed by police were

unarmed compared to 18% of white people killed. Since the killing Trayvon Martin, there has been an increase in media coverage and public discussion on racial disparities in police enforcement. However, much of this coverage takes either optimistic or passive approaches and often lacks context (Callais 2016). Furthermore, “riots” tend to drive media coverage related to these murders, which has the effect of being pro-police (Callais 2016), and can also be pro-murder. In this article, I argue that a shared (master) narrative is formed and utilized by police officers involved in the shootings of unarmed (and armed) Black civilians, which works as a strategy to reinforce racially driven fear, avoid blame, and invoke empathy.

Shortly after Martin’s death and the not guilty verdict of his killer, George Zimmerman, the Black Lives Matter Movement emerged, further enhancing and amplifying discussions of racialized police brutality. Simultaneously, police brutality and murders of young Black men and women have remained ongoing with many captured on video from bystanders and nearby surveillance cameras that activists and community members worked diligently to obtain. Though not all acts of brutality and killings were so visible. There were killings that were not captured and hidden in the back of police wagons like in the case of Freddie Gray. Though, this is not to say that police always attempt to avoid these murders being captured on video; the slaying of Michael Brown resembled a public execution or psychological terrorism (or “vicarious trauma” [Downs 2016]) as law enforcement left his dead body lying in the street for hours.



## THE MASTER NARRATIVE

*The Holocaust did not begin with killings; it began with words.*  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

In this recurrence of police killings of Black people and its public presence, law-enforcement began to form a master narrative (Muldoon et al. 2015) of fear. Muldoon et al. (2015:6) describe master narratives as a “narrative that conveys a common felt experience”. The interpretations of the master narratives are not necessarily those of individual police involved in these killings, “nor reflective simply of their psychological reactions, but rather sociological conceptualizations” developed using abductive processes. The most salient single narrative in these cases is “I feared for my life.” Other narratives and accounts are not as direct and may use other language. For example, Darren Wilson, the officer acquitted in the killing of Michael Brown, described his vision of Brown as a “demon” (Davidson 2014). Jurors in this case empathized with Wilson’s “persistence of fear” (Davidson 2014), and thus declined to indict him. While Wilson does not necessarily use the word fear, he invokes perceptions of being afraid by describing Brown as demonic—constituted by and constitutive of this master narrative of fearing for one’s life. At the sociological level, a master narrative is then understood in the broader social context—linked to various spheres in society—becoming a social product in which “fundamental aspects of life and the social structure are revealed to us in an indirect manner” (Ruiz 2009:11).

In making these connections, we have to examine not only police rhetoric, but also how this discourse is (re)created in other spheres. In the political sphere, for

example, Hillary Clinton, in her description of (Black) youth involved in crimes stated: “[t]hey are not just gangs of kids anymore. They are often the kinds of kids that are called ‘superpredators.’ No conscience, no empathy. We can talk about why they ended up that way, but first we have to bring them to heel” (Mackey and Jilani 2016). Here she reinforces the idea that Black individuals are more dangerous and violent in three different ways. First, although she is referring to minors she attempts to remove the public from perceiving them as such. Then, she uses the term “super-predators,” which invokes the idea that their so-called ruthless behavior is innate or natural—animal-like, which is why they must first be restrained and controlled before figuring out the cause of their so-called bestial behavior. Finally, she asserts that they lack moral aptitude, which further shapes the idea that they are dangerous and animal-like. This discourse becomes all the more problematic given that young Black people are more often the victims of these police shootings.

While the master narrative works to reveal a theme that runs across the accounts of law-enforcement, it also allows for an examination of its use and what it does. At the sociological level, discourse does more than say things, it also does things. I argue that the master narratives used by these officers works as a strategy to reinforce racialized fear, avoid blame and invoke empathy. Sten Hansson (2015) developed a framework for analyzing the discursive strategies of blame avoidance in government, noting various uses and linguistic approaches. Receiving blame can “ruin personal or organizational reputation and result in the loss of power, finances, and job security for particular officeholders” (Hansson 2015:298), thus a lot can be on the line, especially for

government organizations. Subsequently, it becomes crucial to avoid blame and strategies used to do so have the capacity to “encourage or discourage social learning, that is, the processes by which people both inside and outside of government make sense of each other’s perspectives and attitude, gain moral insights and reproduce shared meaning” (Hansson 2015:298). Furthermore, the socio-political landscape may potentially be altered as these strategies attempt to control public discourse, political agendas, and legitimate particular agents while disempowering others (Hansson 2015).

Understanding the use of these strategies in full requires a historical approach to discourse. For example, we must make connections between the “negro rapist” in the Victorian era, the myth of the bestial Black man in the later 1900s, and the trope of “super-predator” or “thug” prevalent today, bringing these together to understand how they worked to justify traditional lynching in the “unwritten law” of the past (Wells-Barnett 1995) and reinforcing the so-called blue-shield in the context of current policing.

I argue that the master narrative formed in this context appeals to public empathy and avoids blame. In doing so, the utilization of the master narrative further reinforces the implicit bias or macroaggression towards people of color (Black individuals, particularly) as being more dangerous than other groups. The goal here is to demonstrate *how* these fictional narratives form what Shane Muldoon et al. (2015) call a “master narrative,” which helps officers avoid blame while also reinforcing the notion that Black people are dangerous.

...we all know that when the police put out a statement, it is—it’s a fictional narrative. It’s a narrative that is adjusted to the legal standards, which is basically that they felt a threat and they feared for their lives. So, what’s really important is

sometimes to hold them to those accounts, because, over time, as evidence comes forward, that narrative will fall apart. (Goodman and Camarena 2016)

While journalists and media commentators have discerned this narrative pattern, which may seem obvious to some, part of the goal in this study is to make the implicit explicit; that is, to provide a scientific evaluation of the respective phenomena. Too often social science lags behind current social processes, only giving them scientific review when their consequences are more overt and visible or when non-academics intensively address and mobilize to resolve the issue. Part of this could be attributed to what Patricia Hill Collins (1989:751) has called the “Eurocentric masculinist knowledge-validation process”, wherein “scholars, publishers, and other experts represent specific interests and credentialing processes, and their knowledge claims must satisfy the epistemological and political criteria of the contexts in which they reside.”

#### LAW-ENFORCEMENT’S DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES FOR BLAME AVOIDANCE

Hansson (2015) reviews several linguistic approaches to blame avoidance, which includes approaches provided by Christopher Hood (2011). I synthesized these approaches into one extensive heuristic model. It includes: ways of arguing, framing, denying, representing social actors and actions, and finally, legitimizing and manipulating social cognition. I applied these approaches specifically to law-enforcement in the context of unarmed killings. In doing so, I used the high-profile cases of Michael Brown, Rekia Boyd, and Walter Scott. The power of the master narrative can be seen as it in some way or another fits into each one of these linguistic approaches. Thus, the master narrative is constitutive of and constituted by these blame avoidance approaches.

Examination of this master narrative and blame avoidance techniques is critical since they influence not only the perceptions of their audiences, but also their decisions. In the Trayvon Martin case, for example, one of the jurors who acquitted Zimmerman said she “had ‘no doubt’ he feared for his life in the final moments of his struggle with Trayvon Martin, and that was the definitive factor in the verdict” (Ford 2013). Though Zimmerman is not a police officer, this shows that the power of this narrative reaches beyond the mere officers, it seems encapsulated in the criminal justice system as a whole at various levels.

### *Ways of Arguing*

The *ways of arguing* are typically characterized by the officer’s persuasion of the audience. Officers attempt to convince the public that they are not blameworthy and as Hansson (2015:299) points out, “this involves making argumentative moves to manipulate the perception of loss...and the perception of agency by proposing that harm has been done unintentionally, unknowingly, involuntarily or by someone else.” In the case of police shootings, the latter is often the case. Shifting blame is common in this approach and may involve the use of “pseudo-argumentative backing of claims or argumentative fallacies that neglect certain premises of rational discussion” (Hansson 2015:300). These argumentative fallacies in the context of police shootings often hinge on the master narrative, especially as officers provide false analogies, appeal to audience feelings, or attack the others’ character. One other facet of this approach is the topic specific conclusion rules or “topoi” (Hansson 2015:300). These are “quasi-argumentative

shortcuts, content related warrants that connect arguments with the claim, but the plausibility of which can be easily questioned” (Hansson 2015:300).

The master narrative used among officers has itself become a type of topoi. This conclusion rule in the context of police shootings is that officers should not be held accountable. As shown in the Rekia Boyd case, Officer Servin bypassed the analogies and character attacks and simply used this topic specific quasi-argumentative shortcut, “I feared for my life”. Rekia Boyd, a 22-year old Black woman, was shot in the back of the head by off-duty officer Dante Servin. Servin reportedly frustrated with a loud party going on in his neighborhood, dispatched police from home saying that he was “afraid something bad was going to happen” (Myer and Morris 2013). Upon leaving his home about ten minutes later, Servin strapped on an unregistered handgun. After an exchange between Servin and Antonio Cross, a member of Boyd’s party, Servin claimed that Cross aimed a gun at him and that he “feared for his life” (Runge 2013). Servin then fired several shots, one of which struck Rekia Boyd in the back of the head (as the feared party was not facing him). The police spokesperson went on to claim that “the officer fired in defense of his life when a man approached his vehicle and pointed a gun at him...incidentally, no gun was ever found” (Runge 2013:1). It was later determined that the man accused of pointing a gun at Servin (and also shot by Servin) was holding a cell phone (Gorner and Dardick 2013). Servin, having “no regrets” did not need to appeal to public sentiment or show remorse for his actions because he simply used the master narrative.

This narrative is not only used to influence public sentiment, but also judges and jurors. Servin remained on the police force during the proceeding trial for charges of involuntary manslaughter and was later ruled not guilty by Judge Dennis Porter, stating, “Simply put, the evidence presented in this case does not support the charges on which the defendant was indicted and tried. There being no evidence of recklessness as a matter of law, there is no evidence to which the state could sustain its burden of proof as to the fourth element of the charge of involuntary manslaughter” (Pathieu and Gallardo 2015:1). As with the juror in Zimmerman’s and other officer-involved shootings, shooters are justified in their actions based on the premise that they feared for their lives—a claim legitimated by the ongoing notion that Black citizens are dangerous.

#### *Ways of Denying*

There are various ways in which institutions deny or reject accusations. Hansson (2015:301-302) outlines five different methods types, which include: act-denial, control-denial, intention-denial, goal-denial, and mitigation or minimization. Included in this approach also is blame reversal/blaming the victim, which are regarded as stronger forms of denial than the other denying techniques.

While invoking the master narrative and topoi of fear-based shooting, Servin also utilized approaches of denial. Servin claimed that he was aiming for Cross, but Boyd and others were only a few dozen feet away from him (Myer and Morris 2013), implying that shooting was not intentional. After the verdict was determined, Servin stated, “I think it was a mistake for the state’s attorney to charge me, but I also explained to the family that if this is what they needed for closure—for me to be charged—I hope they got what they

were looking for” (Pathieu and Gallardo 2015). Combining intention-denial, Servin also minimizes his actions by means of his comments on the consequences. By arguing that he should not have been charged in the first place and that the only legitimate purpose of the charge being the family’s closure, Servin mitigates the shooting incident.

Using these forms of denial, officers attempt to “alter the perception of the blame taker’s agency” (Hansson 2015:302). Intention-denial stands out among the various forms of denial because providing evidence that the officer had negative intentions can seem impossible, especially when it is an officer’s word in a criminal justice system in which he holds the institutional power and support. This makes intention-denial particularly effective (Hansson 2015).

#### *Representing Social Actors and Actions*

This approach uses various strategies for representing actors and actions, such as impersonalizing and minimalizing the victims and/or the perpetrators (Hansson 2015). However, more salient techniques are also used in the context of police shooting such as “othering,” which establishes an “us” versus “them” context. The “other” often is portrayed with negative stereotypes, which helps blame to endure easily. Though, more importantly in this case, the harm that is done to groups who are represented as negative is less likely to generate blame (Hansson 2015). In other words, if people of color are viewed as threatening or dangerous, harm inflicted on them is less likely to generate blame.

As mentioned previously, part of the master narrative here is the implication that Black individuals are dangerous. This membership categorization provides a foundation



in which the master narrative can be legitimized. Simultaneously, however, the deployment of this master narrative adds to the legitimization and the perception that Black people should be feared. This goes hand-in-hand with the way officers (and their supporters) attempt to represent themselves. Officers attempt to evade accountability by focusing on and representing themselves through their reactions and mental processes that are invisible (e.g. "I feared for my life") and avoiding the discussion of the material effects (Hansson 2015:303), in this case, the death of the shooting victims.

The news media plays a large part in this approach as it tends to focus on and negatively framed protests that follow police shootings. The images and video clips of protests presented by news media attempt to frame (Black) protestors and rioters as dangerous and threatening, negatively shaping and directing the public sentiment towards the protests and away from the incidents that gave rise to them in the first place. News media attempts to deter blame on the officers by reversing this representational approach. That is, the focus tends to shift to the very visible material effects of the protests and riots and avoids discussing the mental processes of the rioters and protestors (e.g. grief, bereavement, social/procedural injustice).

Throughout the transcripts of Darren Wilson's testimony, Wilson discursively portrays Brown as some kind of "superhuman demon" a term that resonates with Clinton's "super-predator." At one point Wilson stated, "It [the gun] went off twice in the car. Pull, click, click, went off, click, went off. When I look up after that, I see him start to run and I see a cloud of dust behind him. I then get out of my car." Wilson makes himself appear helpless until his guns finally fires after the third time he tries. Further

creating the image of Brown as super or rather non-human, he implies that Brown was running so fast that he left a cloud of dust in the air, as one would see in a cartoon or movie.

Wilson, recalling his attempt to shoot Brown, describes Brown:

He looked up at me and had the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon, that's how angry he looked. He comes back towards me again with his hands up. At that point I just went like this, I tried to pull the trigger again, click, nothing happened...At that point I just went like this, I tried to pull the trigger again, click, nothing happened...I just saw his hands up, I don't know if they were closed yet, on the way to going closed, I saw this and that face coming at me again, and I just went like this and I shielded my face...So I pulled the trigger, it just clicks that time. Without even looking, I just grab the top of my gun, the slide and I racked it...still not looking just holding my hand up, I pulled the trigger again, it goes off...When I look up after that, I see him start cloud of dust behind him. I then get out of my car. As I'm getting out of the car I tell dispatch, "shots fired, send me more cars (*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* 2014).

Each of these descriptors display non-human qualities, especially “demon” as it works to dehumanize Brown and solicit images of fear. Wilson on the other hand struggles with his gun, and represents himself as scared, covering his face and shooting aimlessly only to open his eyes in relief as Brown is off running.

#### *Legitimizing And Manipulating Social Cognition*

Legitimizing includes explanations and justifications of actions of law-enforcement. Hansson (2015) reviews four categories of legitimations discovered by Theo van Leeuwen (2008), and Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (2009). These include: authority legitimation, moral evaluation legitimation, rationalization legitimation, and mythopoesis, which involve using moral or cautionary tales where sanctions proceed

legitimate or illegitimate actions. These legitimizing techniques are generally used to end discussions by evoking some kind of authority as justification and avoid critical discussion.

Critical linguists have outlined the way manipulation occurs in various forms. Manipulation along with other approaches to avoid blame can be a “discursive abuse of power” (Hansson 2015:304; Van Dijk 2006). Thus, critical discourse analysis works as a “resource for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic form” (Fairclough 1995:1). Teun van Dijk (Hansson 2015; Van Dijk 2006) has proposed a three-fold approach to analyze manipulation in CDA. According to van Dijk, manipulation occurs when discourse is used by dominant groups to “(re)produce their power and to hurt the interests of less powerful groups” (Hansson 2015:304). Manipulation is also present when text and talk are designed to misinform, (re)create group polarization, and/or play on vulnerabilities (Hansson 2015).

The following case involving Walter Scott (Schmidt and Apuzzo 2015) is exemplary of the use of authority legitimation and also demonstrates manipulation components of the accounts given in the defense of Slager. Officer Slager, killer of Walter Scott, claimed that he was responding to a traffic stop when Scott attempted to obtain Slager’s taser and use it against the officer. According to Slager’s narrative, he then shot Scott while defending himself. Later, Slager’s lawyer stated:

Slager thinks he properly followed all procedures and policies before resorting to deadly force. When confronted, Officer Slager reached for his Taser — as trained by the department — and then a struggle ensued.

The driver tried to overpower Officer Slager in an effort to take his Taser.

Seconds later, the report added, he radioed that the suspect wrested control of the

device. Even with the Taser's prongs deployed, the device can still be used as a stun gun to temporarily incapacitate someone. Slager "felt threatened and reached for his department-issued firearm and fired his weapon," his attorney added (Knapp 2015).

Through his lawyer, Slager references both his status and role, and makes impersonal references to the rules (procedures and policies, "department-issued firearm"). Slager also relies on institutional authority by referring to the training he obtained by the police department. A video later emerged that revealed Scott unarmed and running away from Slager, as Slager shot him repeatedly in the back and went on to plant the Taser next to Scott's dead body.

Beyond these linguistic approaches to blame avoidance, two others remain salient in the context of police shootings. The first one is "drawling a line," which occurs when officers open with a "preemptive apology calculated to disarm critics and attract sympathy" (Hansson 2015:305) and "changing the subject," which attempts to shift the public agenda to other issues such as "Black on Black violence."

#### *Ways of Framing: The 5-year-old Overcomes the Hulk*

Utilizing cognitive linguist George Lakoff's work, Hansson (2015) discusses framing as another linguistic approach to blame avoidance. Framing is one of the most common techniques used by media, law-enforcement, or any individual or institution with a communication component. Framings are usually based on some type of narrative. One of the common frames for blame is the "rescue narrative" coined by George Lakoff (Hansson 2015:300). This narrative includes a hero, a villain, and a victim. There is also the so-called "bad apple" framework where institutions or organizations argue that the

problem is not the barrel, but one bad apple and so simply getting rid of that one bad apple, the barrel (institution/ideology/authority) will function properly. This saves the organization itself while targeting someone else for blame. It is common for institutions to respond to “accusations by convicting a person rather than by changing their dominant beliefs or their possibly flawed system of operation” (Hansson 2015:301).

As one of the most salient linguistic approaches among law-enforcement, framing is essential. The following is from the court transcripts of the *State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* case (2014):

**Wilson:** I tried to hold his right arm and use my left hand to get out to have some type of control and not be trapped in my car any more. And when I grabbed him, the only way I can describe it is I felt like a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan.

**Attorney:** Holding onto a what?

**Wilson:** A Hulk Hogan, that’s just how big he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm (*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* 2014).

On one hand, Wilson infantilizes himself, painting an image of himself as a “five-year-old.” On the other hand, he compares Brown to former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan, provoking images of strength, masculinity, and the ideation of a skilled fighter. This image of a 5-year old trying to hold onto Hulk Hogan works to invoke empathy among the public and courts. In this analogy, he omits the weaponry and tools the “5-year-old” is equipped with. Wilson’s infantilization further aided his created representation and the audience’s imaginary of a deepened fear. Wilson portrays himself as childlike figure and

Brown as demon, slightly altering Clinton's earlier rhetoric that deemphasized the youth of Black juvenile delinquents and described them as super-predators. Enhancing the imagery of fear, Wilson instead made himself appear child-like, but maintained a domineering image of Brown as a "super-predator."

There is a theme that strings throughout Wilson's testimony and continually gives the impression of Brown as dangerous, evil, and super in various ways. Each of these descriptions not only negatively characterizes Brown, but works to create a perception of fear Wilson himself must have experienced. "As I'm getting out of the car I tell dispatch, 'shots fired, send me more cars'" (*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* 2014). Telling dispatch that shots were fired leaves open to interpretation who was doing the firing with the implication that it is not the officer himself.

Deepening the fear of this "5-year-old," Wilson describes Brown using the word "demon" (*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* 2014). At this point, Brown is like the professional wrestler Hulk Hogan (who stood bigger than The Incredible Hulk himself), with Roadrunner speed, and the look of a demon who's "grunting" and "aggravated." As he begins to wrap up his retelling of the incident, Wilson again depicts Brown in ways to provoke fear amongst listeners, portraying him as having a desire to kill and the strength to do so:

I'm backing up pretty rapidly, I'm backpedaling pretty good because I know if he reaches me, he'll kill me. And he had started to lean forward as he got that close, like he was going to just tackle me, just go right through me (*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* 2014).

In concluding his recap of the incident, Wilson again embellishes the event. His account sounded like a hero's tale he stands above the body watching the evil vanish from the face of the demon. Again, like in theatre, Wilson describes Brown's fall dramatically as his feet kind of came up a little bit and then fell, and then he, Wilson, in a heroic fashion picks up the radio and sends for everyone else now that the demon had been destroyed.

And when he gets about that 8 to 10 feet away, I look down, I remember looking at my sides and firing, all I see is his head and that's what I shot. I don't know how many, I know at least once because I saw the last one go into him. And then when it went into him, the demeanor on his face went blank, the aggression was gone, it was gone, I mean, I knew he stopped, the threat was stopped. When he fell, he fell on his face. And I remember his feet coming up, like he had so much momentum carrying him forward that when he fell, his feet kind of came up a little bit and then they rested. At that point I got back on the radio and said, "send me a supervisor and every car you got" (*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson* 2014).

The 5-year-old overcomes the Hulk.

#### CONCLUSION: INVOKING MURDEROUS EMPATHY

The accounts examined here showed how law-enforcement officers involved in shootings of unarmed people of color have a tendency to portray themselves as vulnerable and in fear of losing their lives. Conjuring this master narrative served them in two ways. First, to gain empathy from the public and potential jurors, and second, to avoid blame for their actions. Furthermore, while some accounts may focus on the officers themselves (e.g. "I feared for my life"), as part of the master narrative even these work to reinforce the racist ideology that people of color, especially Black individuals, are naturally dangerous. Thus, the master narrative, as Muldoon et al. (2015:20) point out, is a "social discourse, not simply a series of individual stories." As a social discourse

then, social scientists must utilize textual methods much more in order to examine the way in which language shapes perceptions, policies, major decisions (e.g. acquittal of officers) and consequently the objective reality.

I also applied an analytical framework outlined by Hansson (2015) that examined various discursive strategies used by officers to avoid blame. Many of these strategies came together to form this master narrative. Simultaneously, however, the master narrative was used as the topoi of blame avoidance techniques. Thus, the master narrative in this context is constitutive of, and constituted by blame-avoidance approaches law-enforcement officers deploy after shootings of unarmed people of color. Throughout the various blame-avoiding techniques and use of the master narrative, officers simultaneously appeal to sympathy and empathy of the public (and jurors). Resting on racism, these narratives seek to invoke a type of murderous empathy for the officers. The constant claim of fearing for one's life while simultaneously characterizing Black citizens as non-human could deepen this empathy. As noted in the concluding verdicts in many of these cases, judges, jurors, and the general public alike supported the master narrative, suggesting or claiming that the offending officers genuinely feared for their lives.

One of the more subtle implications here is the urge for sociologists and other social scientists to increase the utilization of text analytics beyond content analysis. If sociology is aimed at examining social processes and structures, and text analysis should be recognized for its ability to capture such processes, it only makes sense for scholars to move beyond the "discursive positivism" (Agger 2013:191) and methodical politics.



## CHAPTER VII

### DESCALING THE ISSUE: NEWS MEDIA'S USE OF DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES TO FRAME VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS PERSONAL TROUBLES

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter emphasizes the relationship between gender and violence. Similar to the previous case studies, this study utilizes a feminist critical discourse analysis to examine the discursive strategies used in news media when reporting issues of violence against women. While studies discussing the framing of violence against women as isolated incidents are not new, this case study seeks to show how news media decontextualize violence against women, creating the public perception that these are individual troubles rather than public issues (to paraphrase C. Wright Mills) using selective framing that is accomplished through the use of various linguistic maneuvers. While the term “violence against women” is often used, the cases here specifically focus on rape. There are various forms of violence against women that transcend the physical and can be indirect. In using the term “violence against women,” I am not implying that the discourse on all forms of violence against women are the same regardless of the type of news media and/or type of violence. The use of the term serves as a means of intentionally placing this issue in the broader perspective about the problem of violence against women. As Lazer (2007:143-144) argues, a “feminist politics of articulation” is

necessary in these endeavors, meaning that simply citing a few feminist writers is not enough and there needs to be guidance by “feminist principles and insights in theorizing and analysing the seemingly innocuous yet oppressive nature of gender as an omni-relevant category in many social practices” (Lazer 2007:143). Failing to identify the overarching issues could mean that this type of analysis has not been sufficiently articulated and come together.

### SCALING AND DESCALING

Illustrative of this principle, Angelique Kidjo was interviewed by Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now!* at the United Nations Climate Change conference where she discussed the impact of climate change on skin cancer in Western Africa. She then went on to relate climate change to the disappearance of fish species and other foods, which increased food costs. That increase has forced young girls into prostitution so they could bring home more food:

I went to villages and talked to women...and their concern—the first thing was climate change because they say we feel so powerless not to be able to feed our children because the food gets more expensive. We can’t eat seasonally because we don’t have the stuff anymore; it rains when it’s not supposed to rain. And we are just powerless to see our girls go into prostitution. We know what they are doing to bring food home but we can’t do nothing as parents. The desperation of parents in front of those effects of climate change on their families is something that nobody is talking about.

The type of connection (Goodman 2016) between the increase in sex-workers in West Africa and its social causes (climate change), is a fundamental aspect of the sociological imagination Mills (1959) outlined. An ahistorical perspective that looks at individual or small-scale incidents will inadvertently ask, “what does climate change have to do with

child prostitution?” If, on the other hand, the socio-historical context of the issue is taken into consideration and identified, as Kidjo (2015) has done, the connections and structural issues of climate change becomes clear. Furthermore, this connection highlights the gendered violence engendered by climate change. Like Kidjo (2015), we must connect various social dimensions, perspectives, and social causes in order to fully understand the issues.

Violence against women, such as rape and other forms of domestic violence, is often perceived as isolated incidents, particular to the individuals involved as opposed to a social problem or public issue that reveals the patterns and processes associated with this phenomenon at the societal level. Consequently, personal or individual remedies are employed as solutions. While individualized approaches may be helpful to survivors, these approaches are insufficient. Muldoon et al. (2015:20) identified what they called a “master narrative” in sexual assault. They argue that “the private troubles of survivors being met through ‘one at a time,’ criminal justice, medico-psychological, and material support interventions—although important to many survivors—are by themselves inadequate as solutions to the problem of sexual assault” (Muldoon et al. 2015:17). Whether they are emotional, criminal justice, housing, or other forms of support, (Muldoon et al. 2015), these are inadequate if not made on a broader, social level. This is especially true as the “rates of sexual assault complaints from the criminal justice system” tends to be continually high (Muldoon et al. 2015:18). Access to these individualized remedies can also be difficult for survivors. In any case, there needs to be a solution at the societal level that accounts for the larger social structure which is

“necessary to redress sexual assault as a public issue, not just as a collection of private troubles” (Muldoon et al. 2015:17-18) but at the aggregate social level.

Social institutions including education, health, housing, policy, media, and other spheres (Muldoon et al. 2015) need to be addressed as rape culture runs through each one, thus, a social transformation is needed. The scale of this issue goes beyond the individual level and requires more than changing the laws or even opening shelters for survivors. We need a mobilization of scale for the way we think about, report, and discuss domestic violence. Just as personal trouble approaches to domestic violence “mask[s] an imperative for wider institutional and societal reforms to ensure a lasting resolution of this public issue” (Muldoon et al. 2015:20), news that report domestic violence as isolated incidents and fail to discuss the social implications, mask, silence, and writes the issue out of the picture. Part of this process involves minimizing the scale at which the issue is understood. They regard the issue as minor, idiosyncratic and personal problems.

The decontextualization in reporting on violence against women can also be found in other reporting on issues that affect oppressed communities. For example, the police shootings of unarmed African Americans are often reported as isolated events, situated at the individual level with focus on the offender and victim as opposed to the institutionalized racism within law-enforcement and the historical lynching of African Americans in the U.S. However, I argue that this is not always the case and analyses should be more structural prominent in reporting on other issues. To demonstrate this, I compare reporting of mass shootings with reporting on violence against women, rape in

particular. It should be clearly noted that this is not a comparison between mass shootings and violence against women (as women are also victims in mass shootings), but rather their subsequent reporting. The incidents themselves are not the focus in this study and there is no attempt to compare such tragedies. Some may feel that the magnitude of a mass shooting may be larger than that of the rape of one girl/woman. However, the magnitude of such crimes, small or large, does not hinder reports from including a broader social context.

Another caveat that should be noted in this comparison is that there is no claim here that reports on mass shootings fully outline the broader social implications. Mass shootings are often reduced to the mental health of the shooters and inability of current laws to keep guns out of the hands of those populations. Neither of these explain why people choose the targets they do, or why they resort to violence against others. These incentives to violence could take various trajectories. Why, only in the U.S., do they take the form of shooting sprees? The point is that these phenomena are temporally, geographically, and socially situated and thus to counter them, a temporal socio-geographical approach is required. All the while, unlike reports on sexual violence against women, there are attempts made to include other social forces in discussions and reports on mass shootings, insignificant as they may be. Thus the goal of this project is to examine newspaper articles through feminist critical discourse analysis to see if it, as a medium of continuing education, connects or disconnects these incidents to/from a wider issue.

## FRAMING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

An important point here then is framing. If these issues are framed in such a way that eschews the need for the specific knowledges of women, leaving the public understanding incomplete or erroneous, effective solutions will become unavoidable. Media's spin on violence against women, femicide in particular, uses various frames. Six of these frames were outlined by Lane Gillespie et al. (2013:231) they include: "1) normalization, 2) framing crimes as isolated incidents, 3) putting blame on the criminal justice system, 4) blaming the survivors, 5) citing personal loss of control or moral breakdown on behalf of the perpetrator, and 6) minimizing the crime by focusing on broader issue. It should be noted that the 'isolated event' frame mentioned here is at the individual level, that is, "it portrays the crime as unexpected, without any discussion of the likely history of abuse between the victim and perpetrator" (Gillespie et al. 2013:234). The historical focus in the above calls on the two people involved in the incident as opposed to the issue itself being understood as a socio-historical phenomenon. The normalization of femicide presented another key problem: minimization of femicide by either focusing on the couple's history of domestic violence, or by highlighting the long list of other cases of femicide in the state or country. While this may include rates of domestic violence, the framing failed to "speak to the nature of domestic violence as a social problem" (Gillespie et al. 2013:235), portraying the issue of femicide as simply "routine" or "commonplace"—naturalizing the issue.

## SEXUALITY AT THE CENTER

At the center of various feminist political theories is sexuality, which emerges from various issues, including “abortion, sexual harassment, prostitution (sex-work), female sexual slavery, and pornography” along with femicide and rape (MacKinnon 1982:516). Feminist theory and praxis endeavors work to unmask these and other issues that are not commonly viewed as relevant to sexuality and scaled to a higher political plane.

Feminist theory, according to Catherine MacKinnon (1982:516), makes the argument that “the molding, direction, and expression of sexuality organizes society into two sexes—women and men. This division underlines the totality of social relations and its power dynamics. Birth control and abortion, for example, are framed as reproductive matters or “proper or improper social constraints on nature. Or they are seen as private, minimizing state intervention into intimate relations” (MacKinnon 1982:531). Similar treatment occurs with regards to rape as the conversations focus on whether it was provoked or mutual (MacKinnon 1982).

This common avoidance and de-framing of the sexual element pervades these topics. Within heteronormative societies, sex is commonly thought of as something men *do* to women and thus “penetration (often by a penis) is also substantially more central to both the legal definition of rape and the male definition of sexual intercourse than it is to women’s sexual violation or sexual pleasure” (MacKinnon 1982:532, emphasis added). This highlights the fact that even the issues that primarily affect women are approached

with a man/male bias. Sexuality itself then becomes a form of power embodied by gender (MacKinnon 1982).

## THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

The slogan “personal is political” is arguably the most popular epigram that emerged from the 1960s women’s movement. This phrase aimed to validate the “political nature of women’s individual experiences and voices and acts as a reminder that theory and intellectual inquiry have a responsibility in society” (Crabtree et al. 2009:6). The phrase personal is political means that “women’s distinctive experience as women occurs within that sphere that has been socially lived as the personal—private, emotional, interiorized, particular, individuated, intimate—so that what it is to know the politics of woman’s situation is to know women’s personal lives” (MacKinnon 1982:535). Furthermore, “to say that the personal is political means that gender as a division of power is discoverable and verifiable through women’s intimate experience of sexual objectification, which is definitive of and synonymous with women’s lives as gender female” (MacKinnon 1982: 535). Personal and subjective ways of knowing are validated as forms of knowledge production (Crabtree et al. 2009).

The institutionalization of ideologies shapes the overall structure of society and the spheres within it. Sexist and other oppressive ideologies have dominated popular media, including news media (Gillespie et al. 2013; Kettrey 2013; Krafka et al. 1997; Strega et al. 2014). This has instilled notions into the masses’ consciousness through various symbolic (and material) processes. Institutions, such as news media, should be seen as “culturally embedded and discursively constructed ensembles...produced through



everyday practices and encounters and through cultural representations and performances (Sharma 2006: 27). In sum, the slogan “the personal is political” has helped set the stage for reshaping people’s perception about women’s issues as political issues, demonstrating that discourses “do not just describe things; they do things” (Ignatow and Mihalcea 2017:48).

## FINDINGS

### *Lexical Absence/Suppression*

When reading news articles, it is important to ask what has been omitted. While some may argue that reporters simply report on an incident and for simplicity and easy understanding omit other information or context, there is much more at stake and much more involved than mere simplicity. The effect could be decontextualization. The decisions made by journalists and news media to include or omit particular aspects relating to events is a form of ideological work (Machin and Mayr 2012). The question that then arises is how do we know what should be expected in such texts? Is it the journalist job to provide context? Every discipline has its own set of ethics. Research shows that news media has a particular effect on how people come to understand their social environments, then the moral responsibility of the media as a whole becomes relevant.

One way to interrogate this issue is through lexical analysis, which looks for words used and not used in any given text with the understanding that each word carries a particular meaning (Machin and Mayr 2012). We can evaluate ideological underpinnings in language by examining linguistic resources, the choices made by the authors and the

consequences of such choices. Sociology is inherently comparative and one way to get an idea of what is missing is to do comparisons. In this lexical analysis, we can see the lexical choices made in articles about mass shootings and articles about violence against women in various societies.

A *New York Times* article (Macur and Schweber 2012) gave an excellent account of the socio-historical context of the town of Steubenville that gave rise to the importance of its Big Red football team. The article highlighted why many in the town consider some of the football players as “heroes” and “able to get away with things for years because of it” (Macur and Schweber 2012). While this is the critical aspect argued in the present study, the article failed to provide the same sort of socio-historical context that would draw attention to the very commonness of the issue. The authors also noted that “the case is not the first time a high school football team has been entangled in accusations of sexual assault” (Macur and Schweber 2012). But rather than problematizing previous cases, it simply drew attention to the distinction between past and present: “in the age of social media, when teenagers are capturing much of their lives on their camera phones” (Macur and Schweber 2012).

In an article concerning the Congressional Aide case (Alexander 2014) after Donny Ray Williams pled guilty, the same author reported on the announcement that was published in the “public safety” section of the newspaper. In the conclusion of both articles, the author focused on the career of Williams. In the first one he reported that Williams “left Capitol Hill two months after his arrest” and the latter he gave a historical account of Williams career since he began in 1999 (Alexander 2014). Even though the

follow-up article was published in “public safety” section, there was no discussion on the potential implications of this case. There was no recall of previous sexual assault cases involving government officials or the implications concerning the crucial nature of the trust and protection expected of the nation’s leaders. Notwithstanding Williams’ exemption of jail time for these sexual assaults, there was no mention of the general amnesty of rapists and other forms of violence against women.

### *Structural Opposition/Localization*

Structural oppositions between local and national news implicitly suggests the level of importance. This process takes place through what is called ideological squaring. At the local level, “opposing classes of concepts are built up around participants” (Machin and Mayr 2012:40). This suggested level of importance could also take place in placing the information in various sections of the newspaper. The result is that evaluation of importance occurs through the oppositions even if one or the other is not overtly said to be more or less important. Readers may evaluate the level of importance of any particular story based on its placement between Local or National news.

Both of the rape cases examined here descale these events through placement: The Steubenville rape in “Sports,” and congressional aide rape in “Local.” The “Sports” section is geared toward a specific audience and the title of the article, “As Rape Case Unfolds, City is Split” (Macur and Schweber 2012), adds a descaling character. It frames the issue as “splitting” the city as opposed to the rape. Furthermore, it locates the rape as a sports issue. As Gillespie et al. (2013:226) point out, “word selection in both title/headline and throughout an article can potentially influence the general public’s

understanding of an event and the participants involved.” Thus, the title’s focus on the city itself is problematic in that it shifts the readers understanding of the event away from the critical issue and towards a dividing of the city.

*The “Local” Congressional Aide Rape Case.* Although the case involves a congressional aide (K. Alexander 2012), specifically a staff director for the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee, a position that requires direct work with Congress, senators, and representatives, the article was published in the “Local” section of the news site. As a government official in the nation’s capital, it would be expected that this would be published in the national section. With its placement in local news, the level of importance diminishes. Discursive strategies like this may be subtle, but their meaning potential for diverting the attention is enormous (Machin and Mayr 2012:73-74).

*The Steubenville “Sports” Rape.* While reaching out to the Sports community is definitely a step towards exposing and teaching people about violent sports culture, the initial *NY Times* coverage of the Steubenville Rape Case (Macur and Schweber 2012) placed in the “Sports” section undermines the national importance of the case. As *The Hunting Ground* (Dick 2015) and other documentaries are bringing to light the mass amount of violence against women on college campuses, and within organizations and groups affiliated with high schools and colleges is revealed as the understanding of rape culture grows. However, these discursive strategies continue to counter the attempts to mobilize the scale in which this issue is recognized.

When we compare this initial report to reports on mass shootings, we can see more clearly the different discursive strategies at work. The heading “Gunman Kills 12 in Colorado, Reviving Gun Debate” (Frosch and Johnson 2012) is a good example. This title functions to move us from the small-scale (Gunman Kills 12) to the large scale (Gun Debate), automatically drawing a connection and giving us a clearer understanding of the larger issue. The title, “Rape Case Unfolds on Web and Splits City,” does not do this. Even though this was the initial article in the Times, the focus itself is not on the event itself, but on the digital aspect of the evidence and the “split city”. In addition, the focus on the splitting city localizes the issue, which could also lower its perceived importance to the larger society. The shooting issue is viewed as a national problem, while the rape issue is viewed as an individual problem on the local level.

### *Word Connotations*

Word connotations help place text in particular frameworks or discourses (Machin and Mayr 2012). In this section what is shown is particular lexical choices that places mass shootings in a larger discourse, that is, words that mobilize the scale and importance of the issue, while the lexical choices in the articles concerning violence against women descale the issue. Word connotations can create senses of urgency and importance or alternatively, diminish or conceal the issue, the responsibility, and thus the solution (Machin and Mayr 2012).

The initial article in the *New York Times* (Nagourney et al. 2015) about the San Bernardino Shooting noted at the start of the article, “Panic, chaos and rumor gripped this largely working-class community...as the attackers carried out the nation’s worst mass

shooting since the assault on an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., nearly three years ago.” Right away, the authors refer to a previous mass shooting highlighting the pervasiveness of these events. In this short segment there is a hyperlink on “mass shooting” that leads the reader to another article in the national news section titled, “How Often Do Mass Shootings Occur? On Average, Every Day, Records Show” that covers studies on mass shootings. It includes bar graphs, and explores times, locations, number of deaths, and the relations of those involved (Nagourney et al. 2015). Similarly, *The Washington Post’s* initial article titled “The San Bernardino shooting is the second mass shooting today and the 355th this year” (Ingraham 2015) outlined shooting events that involved four or more people shot in 2015. This article included other links to related articles such as “The Simple Reasons Why the Shootings Won’t Stop;” “The Other Mass Shooting that Happened Today in the U.S.,” and other sources that track the number of mass shootings each year (Ingraham 2015).

“Reviving Gun Debate” (Frosch and Johnson 2012) implies that this is a widely discussed issue both now and in the past. Furthermore, making the claim that the gun debate is being revived just a few hours after the event reveals the assumption that discussions will recur. This is a safe assumption, given that mass shootings are often followed by discussions concerning gun laws, a culture of violence, mental illness, access to healthcare, social isolation, and other elements related to structural social influences (Sanders 2015; Frosch and Johnson 2012; Ingraham 2015; Nagourney et al. 2015).

Unlike various lexical choices used in reports on mass shootings, lexical choices in domestic violence reports hardly contain any connotations related to the larger social

context. Word connotations help situate events in particular frameworks of reference or discourse (Machin and Mayr 2012). The lexical choices within both the title and text need to be examined to understand what they are communicating. “Rape Case Unfolds on Web and Splits City” connotes a sense of the problem being the splitting city because of the rape evidence uploaded to the web, as opposed to the teenage rape.

Concluding the article (Alexander 2014) with the perpetrator’s resume promotes an evaluative meaning. We could see the differences or “meaning potential” if we were to replace this conclusion with one underlining the sexual assaults and discussing the social implications of rape in society. The authors (Alexander 2014) here had a “range of choices available to them for deciding how they wished to represent individuals and groups of people who are often termed as ‘social actors’ or ‘participants’” (Machin and Mayr 2012:77). Through his representational strategy, the authors’ “choices allow us to place people in the social world and to highlight certain aspects of identity we wish to draw attention to or admit” (Machin and Mayr 2012:77). For example, “Williams began his Capitol Hill career in 1999” (Alexander 2014), paints a different picture than ‘Williams began his rape spree in 2010.’ This is a common news strategy that serves to “distract from actual concrete social processes and issues” (Machin and Mayr 2010:78) regarding violence against women. The *New York Times* did not report the Williams case.

### *Honorifics*

Heavily present in these pieces on mass shootings is the use of functional honorifics that “signal the importance of a social actor or specialization” (Machin and Mayr 2012:82). Mass shooting articles include titles such as: President Obama, Sheriff

Hanlin, Governor Kate Brown, President of the College, spokesman for the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, and Explosives, Mayor Bloomberg, A spokeswoman for the University of Colorado Denver-Anschutz Medical Campus, among others.

Honorifics were also used in the articles concerning rape. However, these were fewer and often held lower levels of importance when compared to the reports on mass shootings. These honorifics included: city police chief, juvenile judge, web analyst, high school principle, coach, lawyer, assistant U.S. attorney, and D.C. Superior Court judge. The use of honorifics further illustrates the level of importance given to each issue.

## DISCUSSION

Instinctively, some may argue that reports on mass shootings may not the best comparison with the reporting of violence against women for various reasons. For instance, they tend to involve more than one person such as the Aurora Theater shooting that left twelve dead; the San Bernardino shooting that left 14 dead; Virginia Tech and Columbine, 32 deaths and 15 deaths, respectively. However, even serial rape cases are not imagined as public. News about former police officer Daniel Holtzclaw, who was sentenced to 263 years for various sexual crimes including first-degree felony rape, gripped some news sites, but the focus often remained at the individual level. The same can be seen in the case of Stephen Collins and the pending case of Bill Cosby.

Very few reports relate the socio-historical dynamics of violence against women and remain centered on the individual episode. On the other hand, discussions concerning guns often have the flexibility of starting with the individual but also scaling back and forth between the individual and social level. The *New York Times* piece discussing the



Aurora shooting claimed that the event was “reviving the gun debate.” In that same piece, the author recounted the Columbine shooting that took place 13 years earlier and another mass shooting that occurred in Toronto just a month before. Another article in the *New York Times* reporting the shooting that occurred at Umpqua Community College in Oregon in 2015, also noted a pattern, reporting, “[T]he massacre added the community college to a string of schools that have been left grieving after mass shootings, a list that runs from Columbine High School in 1999 to Virginia Tech in 2007 to Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., where 20 children were killed in 2012” (Vanderhart et al. 2015). In *The Washington Post*, one entry titled “The San Bernardino shooting is the second mass shooting today and the 355th this year” (Ingraham 2015) outlined shooting events that involved four or more people being shot in 2015. Temporal and frequency characteristics noted in these articles tend to be suppressed when discussing violence against women.

Mass shootings nearly always revive discussions on gun control. News pieces focusing on mass shootings tend to mention gun laws, the latest efforts from NRA and/or politicians to change gun policies, mental illness (often to frame the blame), and other factors that require taking a larger view of the issue. This is rare in issues involving violence against women. As Machin and Mayr (2012:19) assert, “language choices are political in that they shape how people and events are represented.” If these events are often represented as individual troubles through the language choices used in these news sites, then the public is likely to regard them as such since news media are influential in the way we learn and understand social problems (Berns 2004).

Increasingly, news media is framing femicide as domestic violence and subsequently “within the context of a broader social problem (Gillespie et al. 2013:237). However, this “broader social problem” includes talk about the “pervasiveness of domestic violence, utilized domestic violence advocates as sources, talked about the current mechanisms in place to protect victims from domestic violence, and included information regarding resources for readers who may be in violent relationships or know someone in a violent relationship” (Gillespie et al. 2013:236). With the exception of the pervasiveness mentioned, the context of a broader social problem rests on individualized approaches that help survivors. As noted earlier, while these are undeniably important, these approaches are by themselves insufficient for establishing solutions to the problem. Furthermore, none of these include discussions of sexism and/or misogyny, the pervasiveness of violence against women and objectification of women in media, new or old policy and the underrepresentation of women in power, the commodification of the body, the hundreds of thousands of untested rape kits, or other social issues like climate change that, as Kidjo (2015) pointed out, is connected to sexual violence against women and girls.

Reports on mass shootings also mask the broader social context. They mask the social causes while promoting individual level analyses. Gun control, while a matter of government intervention, focuses on the individual’s mental capacity, and criminal history, and the ability to own a gun.

While we might not expect news media and journalists to have a sharpened sociological imagination, journalists are trained to utilize sources important to their

reporting. As Gillespie et al. (2013:226) noted, however, “victim advocates” and academic who may have more informed opinions and scientific facts and are able to contextualize the incidents are often excluded from such reporting. This often leaves neighbors, community members, and law-enforcement officers as sources, which may “inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions” associated with violence against women (Gillespie et al. 2013:226).

## CONCLUSION

This study illustrated how various discursive approaches in news media tend to descale the issue of violence against women, rape in particular, as an individual problem as opposed to a social issue. Comparing the reports of rape and mass shootings, my lexical analysis examined four discursive choices, which included word connotations, lexical suppression, structural oppositions, and honorifics.

One method of descaling included the use of structural oppositions via localization and allocation to newspaper sections. While the reports on mass shooting tended to be in the national section, the rape cases were either in the local or sports section, descaling their level of perceived importance and narrowing their readership.

Through an inter-case examination of lexical suppression, we could see in one article that the reporter is very capable of providing socio-historical contexts as they did for the city where the rape took place, which provided us with some insight on what is missing (socio-historical context) from the issue of rape itself. Similarly, the word connotations in the articles about mass shooting reveal a social dynamic and sense of importance not found in the articles concerning rape. Much of this descaling was

achieved by what was omitted. Reports on mass shootings often included rates, patterns, historical context, and connections to other public institutions.

Articles on mass shootings quite often oscillated between the individual and the society, while the other articles decentered the rape incident and focused on either the career of the perpetrator(s) or other distracting aspects. Finally, the use of honorifics in mass shootings and the reports on rape reveal that reports on rape tend to have weaker signal of importance. There was also much more mention of important figures and the use of honorifics in these reports, compared to reports on violence against women.

As media presentations eschews the unique character of femicide by intimate partners and other forms of violence against women continue to be portrayed as general homicides, outlining these practices becomes all the more imperative. Too often are the partnerships between journalists and academic scholars nonexistent or weak. This is especially true for social scientists outside of political science and economics. If violence against women is generally understood as a series of isolated events while the social structure that influences, reinforces, and tolerates it is ignored, the problem is likely to persist along with rape culture. As Solnit states, “if we talked about crimes like these and why they are so common, we’d have to talk about what kinds of profound change this society, or this nation, or nearly every nation needs” (Solnit 2014:23).

## CHAPTER VIII

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first case study in this dissertation, *Chi-Raq*, outlined the asymmetric war between the state and people of color. Given the material and non-material power the state holds, the asymmetry disadvantages the people of color. Following Sassen (2010b:33), I posit that cities are spaces where global governance challenges are prominent. By destabilizing traditional concepts of war, I moved beyond the conventional understanding of war as armed conflict between nation-states and cast it as a general violent process that occurs at various scales. To highlight this process, I utilized data from news reports and governmental organizations, including an FBI investigation into the Chicago Police Department. Using this data, I drew out a narrative that delineated how this urbanized site of war is established through racist geographical practices and maintained through racist law-enforcement practices.

In my second case study, *I Feared for My Life*, I utilized critical discourse analysis to examine discursive strategies used by police officers for justification and solicitation of appeals for empathy for the murders of unarmed civilians, primarily Black civilians, while also reinforcing the implicit bias that Black individuals are dangerous. These discursive strategies revealed the emergence of a master narrative that connects the officers' discursive strategies for invoking empathy to avoiding blame. An analytical framework for blame avoidance supplemented the critical discourse analysis to underline

the relationship between the master narrative and blame avoidance. Using high-profile cases in news media, I demonstrated how these narratives take various forms and work to the benefit of the officer(s) involved.

In the final case study, *Descaling the Issue*, I examined news media sites and their discursive practices when reporting domestic violence. I argued that suppression or lexical absence, along with word connotations, patterns, and connections to other public institutions work as discursive strategies that de-scale these issues back into the private sphere. The Feminist Movement of the 1960s popularized the slogan "The Personal is Political." This slogan helped challenge the scale and space where politics are recognized. This mobilization of scale brought issues previously thought of as "private" into the political arena as women's distinctive experiences occurred in what was considered the personal sphere. While there were some achievements to this end, there have been various strategies, including the ones discussed here, that attempt to keep such issues from being understood as "public" or political issues.

## IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This section discusses various implications of this research. This dissertation contributes to feminist criminology, sociology of the news, and serves as an example for the advantage of critical discourse analysis in the social sciences.

The understanding of the extended state and hegemonic apparatus is applied in the case studies. The coercive side of hegemony occurs in the asymmetric war between people of color and the state, while the intellectual side of hegemony occurs within the (news) media, though these are not mutually exclusive. At some points the media is

identified as part of the state's hegemonic apparatus, while at other times, it seems to stand alone with its own hegemonic apparatus. Even in the latter case, however, its hegemonic stances tend to complement the state. For example, the last case study focuses solely on news media's reporting of violence against women as personal troubles as opposed to public issues. Nonetheless, this type of reporting complements the state's refusal to punish perpetrators of violence against women as 994 out of 1000 perpetrators walk free (RAINN 2017).

It is evident that there needs to be a transformation for both news media and law-enforcement. However, because hegemony is pervasive within the major socializing institutions, this social transformation needs to be large in scale in order to reach each component of the hegemonic apparatus within the extended state. The interconnectedness of the social institutions also connects their oppressive nature. As Muldoon and his colleagues (2015) argued, rape culture (along with racism and classism) runs through education, housing, policy, media, and law-enforcement. In order for any one of them to be remedied of their oppressiveness, all would have to work in tandem. However, this transformation, as Gramsci argued, needs to be by the subaltern to avoid what Alexander discussed as preservation through transformation where racialized systems of social control are preserved over time by their transformations into a new oppressive systems.

It is clear that news media plays a large role in both social problems and social change. It is necessary for reporters and advocates for such social problems to collaborate in order to provide a more informed continuing education to the public. News agencies need to be held accountable for their role as part of the oppressive hegemonic apparatus.

However, social sciences, especially their so-called “queen,” sociology, would benefit from taking a more public presence to address these issues. In order to do that, however, the social sciences will need to increase their use of text mining and analysis.

Given the fact that language is constitutive of - and constituted by - social life, and that text analysis’ has a unique capability of understanding sociocultural processes in real-time or as they occur, it makes sense for sociology and criminology to utilize text analysis. A critical examination of language can be useful for studies at all research scales, including mirco, meso, and macro levels. Therefore, text analyses would be beneficial for studies at different geographical scales (regional, nation-state, global), which refer to ‘the arenas in which political, economic, and social processes and practices are imagined and investigated as occurring,” (Cohen and Frazier 2014:254). Given the importance of news media and its role in shaping the general public’s understanding of various aspects of society, it is paramount that social scientists examine their discursive practices as social products.

Another contribution of this dissertation is the heuristic element that illustrates the importance of textual analysis in disciplines such as sociology. Text analysis is critical, especially for sociology because it has a greater capacity to examine processes as they occur (Fairclough 1995:186). This temporal aspect, I believe, is critical to sociology as a whole, although it is generally the comparative-historical sociologists who tend to focus on large structures and long processes. Speaking of the historical aspect as part of the very roots of sociology, Theda Skocpol (1984:1) notes that the main characteristics of historical sociology (read sociology) are inquiries concerning social structures, processes over time,



the "interplay of meaningful actions and structural context," and highlights of the "particular and varying features of specific kinds of social structures and patterns of change". If we understand that language is constitutive of and is constituted by social life, and, if we agree that text analysis is as capable as other methods in understanding sociocultural processes as they occur, then it seems critical for sociology to be more inclusive of text analysis as a major method of research. The results of this study will help generate more academic discussions and solutions to issues of violence and knowledge representation.

## LIMITATIONS

Each of these cases utilizes interpretative frameworks and qualitative methods of analysis, leaving out the possibility for "generalization," which is viewed by some as a limitation. Also, I rely on evidence already gathered by my sources rather than gathering the evidence independently. Another limitation, and the most critical, to this study is its lack of intersectionality within each case study. Scholars across disciplines have noted the importance of taking an intersectional approach to social science projects. While this project deals with class, gender, and race, individually, the case studies do not take account of them collectively/intersectionally in each case. For example, there may be important nuances in the reporting of sexual violence against women of color or women of different social class or sexuality. I am in hopes that future research on these topics will include a more in-depth approach with intersectionality at its core.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the implications of these findings, there are a few places future research could extend further. The most essential would be developing an intersectional approach to each of these case studies. Mexican Latin Americans and other immigrants tend to also be a strong part of this asymmetric war, especially with the moves to ban sanctuary cities, the enhanced activity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other state and media forces used against this population. Given the relationship between sexism and violence, other research could focus on the direct relationship between violence, women and mass shootings. The Isla Vista massacre, for example, was based on sexist and misogynistic ideas. Finally, future research could examine the narratives used in the killings of social groups, including whites, the LGBTQI community, and religious minorities, most notably, Muslims.

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