

September 2018

A Culture of Resistance: An Ethnography of Tampa Bay's Racial Justice Activist Community

Emily Janna Weisenberger

University of South Florida, weisenberger@mail.usf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

Scholar Commons Citation

Weisenberger, Emily Janna, "A Culture of Resistance: An Ethnography of Tampa Bay's Racial Justice Activist Community" (2018).
Graduate Theses and Dissertations.
<https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/7592>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

A Culture of Resistance:
An Ethnography of Tampa Bay's Racial Justice Activist Community

by

Emily Janna Weisenberger

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology
Department of Anthropology
with a concentration in cultural anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Antoinette Jackson, Ph.D.
Cheryl Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Daniel Lende, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
August 27, 2018

Keywords: intersectionality, capitalism, police brutality, criminal justice, public policy,
discrimination

Copyright © 2018 Emily Janna Weisenberger

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
The Researcher’s Entry into the Community.....	5
Purpose and Goals.....	7
Conceptualizing Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought.....	9
Deep Hanging Out: Methods and Structure in the Activist Community.....	18
Deep Hanging Out.....	21
Motivations.....	28
Racism as a Real Threat in the Literature.....	29
Racism as a Real Threat in Tampa Bay.....	34
Motivating Experiences with Racism.....	36
Motivations to Avoid Activism.....	42
Anti-Racist Ideology.....	47
“Capitalism Sucks”: Anti-Capitalist Ideology.....	48
Anti-Capitalist Ideology in Practice.....	50
Practicing Intersectionality in the Activist Community.....	58
Space, Voice, and Identity.....	61
Confronting Inequality within the Community.....	64
Critique.....	65
Acts of Resistance.....	69
Covert Activism.....	70
Overt Activism.....	75
Acting out Activism through Group Dynamics.....	79
Conclusion.....	83
Limitations and Future Research.....	86
Recommendations.....	87
References.....	91
Appendix A: Sample Interview Guide.....	99
Appendix B: Demographic Breakdown of Interviewees.....	101

Appendix C: May 28, 1996 Newspaper Clipping from the Palm Beach Post.....103
Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approval Form.....104

Abstract

Racial justice activists in Tampa Bay comprise a community and culture structured as a movement of social transformation. Data from eleven interviews and more than 100 hours of participant observation show that activists consist of a diverse array of Tampa Bay residents of varying ages, genders, sexualities, racial/ethnic identities and livelihoods. This community is best described by their beliefs and practices of ideology steeped in intersectionality and anti-capitalism, and are motivated by or empathetic to racial injustices directly experienced by them or those around them. The intention of this paper is to describe activists as they are rather than as they are depicted in the popular imagination, as well as to share the insights of racial justice activists to the public for their own use in resisting injustices.

Introduction

What an odd picture we must have been to the drivers speeding by us on the highway. Some honked as us, disrupting the subdued mood with loud horns. Well past sundown on a cool Friday in November, thirty one people stood in a circle, surrounding a homemade plywood sign – a memorial for a local boy. Our heads bowed, we listened quietly as a Black woman intoned a prayer in the name of Jesus to, among other hopes, end White supremacy. A three-year-old girl twirling a white rose disrupted the silence periodically. Her mother intervened, shushing her. On my left, my hand was clasped with that of a White man I had met just that night, and on my right with a Black woman I had been “organizing” with for months. Red and white roses were tucked into our pockets, to be placed at the foot of the sign.

The Restorative Justice Coalition’s co-founder, a White man, organized the evening with the family of Andrew Joseph III after the grieving couple had approached him. Having lost their Black fourteen-year-old son to what they see as racially motivated police misconduct almost four years previously, they need activists to rely on and wanted help to share in the burden of advocating, educating, and lobbying, particularly during their multi-year lawsuit against the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office. This night was a community event memorializing their child, Andrew Joseph III, with speeches and a roadside memorial sign. The memorial displayed pictures of Andrew making a heart with his hands, wearing a red graduation cap and gown, and taking a selfie.

At this event, I learned that on February 7th, 2014, Andrew attended Student Day at the Florida State Fair. He and other students were given a free ticket to attend the fair on that day. In

previous decades, as recently as 1953 according to the Joseph's lawsuit against the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the school board, and the Fair, the Florida State Fair segregated attendees by only admitting Black people to the fair on "Negro Day" (DiNatale 2016).

According to Andrew's father, the name of the day had changed to "Student Day," but to most students who were given free tickets and came from Black neighborhoods, the segregation had not changed in practice.

When Andrew encountered police at the Fair, he was racially profiled, arrested, searched for gang symbols, photographed, questioned, and ejected from the fair for being near other students who the police reported as acting unruly. Andrew's mother said her son had picked up the shoes of a friend who had gotten in trouble with the police. In doing this, she said, Andrew caught the notice of police, and was arrested for being present and Black. I learned, and then verified with news reports, that the police never called his parents to notify them that he needed to be picked up (DiNatale 2016). Instead, they told Andrew to cross the busy Interstate 4, next to where the memorial was to be assembled, to get to where his ride was waiting for him. As he was crossing, a car struck and killed him. Andrew's father said bitterly, "the last picture I have of my son is a mugshot" and described his death as a "modern lynching."

While the memorial was still being signed with green and black sharpie sentiments such as, "Rest in power Andrew. #BLM" and, "Your life matters," both mother and father spoke of their disillusionment with the supposed freedom of American life. Andrew's father-turned-activist talked about the need to organize quickly when tragedies such as these occur. He reasoned that within the first 48 hours police are already "plotting" and hiding evidence. Andrew's mother spoke about the illusion she had been molded to believe—that raising a successful, honor-roll-making, respectful Black man would insulate her son from police

violence. She told the group that once her son died, she realized that acting “respectable” to earn fair treatment, or the same treatment as White Americans, was a false doctrine she no longer believed to be a salvation to Black Americans.

When the time came to place the memorial on the Florida State Fairgrounds (without asking permission), the large group arrived in the manner of a funeral procession. The parents at the helm, leading eight or so cars with blinkers flashing. The plywood sign was assembled and postholes were dug on the fairgrounds. Andrew’s father, a Black man, along with three White men dug the two postholes. As I watched, the picture conjured a chilling image in my mind of a father digging his son’s grave. I spoke to another activist after the event who told me she had the same thought.

At the end of the evening, one activist described her plans for an act of resistance—to check the memorial at least once a week and put it back up if it is removed or vandalized. She encouraged others to do the same. Other ideas floated around—“demonstrating” at the Fair in February, canvassing to educate community members and high schoolers about Andrew’s unjust death, and boycotting both the Fair and the Fair’s sponsors, such as Coca Cola. Andrew’s mother also called for action. She lamented that previous activists had taken up the cause of her son’s death, but their dedication had fizzled out, a fair worry as this is an issue I have witnessed in the activist community. She asked for us to stay committed. In the car ride to the site of Andrew’s memorial, an activist had said, “we’re gonna see this to the end.” So far, months later, we have.

This vignette is representative of many aspects of racial justice activism in Tampa, both in the choice to advocate for this specific cause, the manner in which activists responded, and the tone of the event. The way that Andrew’s death was characterized at the event is telling of the frameworks these activists use to understand and respond to what they see as injustice. Some

may see Andrew's death as his fault – some may believe he was acting rowdy and should have been more careful when crossing the street. This activist community chose to characterize Andrew's death as a result of institutional racism, particularly in police departments, and as a failure of public safety measures. Activists see raising outcry and calling for the accountability of the police department as not only healing for Andrew's family, but also beneficial to the cause of racial justice at large. Thus, the choice to work for this cause fits well into the ideals of activists working for racial justice in general, such as Black Lives Matter, and activists for criminal justice reform specifically, such as Restorative Justice Coalition. This vignette is also telling of how activists deal with race. I chose to describe the activists how they identify themselves and other activists racially, not just to show that identity is important for these racial justice activists, but to underscore to readers that race and roles are negotiated in this community. This will become clearer when I discuss the ideology of intersectionality in Chapter 5.

Demands such as calls for police accountability, improved police practices, boycotts, and an end to racially motivated policing aim to bring attention to the cause of racial justice locally and nationally (Williams 2015a; Taylor 2016). Activists also hope that their actions can cause concrete changes in local policing, resulting in the sparing of other lives based on racially motivated policing. Many of the activists present at the memorial for Andrew Joseph III have had negative, violent, and even deadly experiences with the criminal justice system, so the motivation was likely also personal. The tone of the event was both somber and joyful. The community was peacefully coming together in support. They may have been angry and exhausted, but they were also determined to use their power (however little) and knowledge to advocate.

The Researcher's Entry into the Community

I first became involved in racial justice activism in Tampa as an activist, not as an anthropologist. The racial injustice I witnessed and learned about led me to attend a couple protests beginning in the fall of 2016 hosted by Black Lives Matter and other racial justice groups in Tampa. I became more involved when two other graduate students and I decided to shoot a video about the partnership between two racial justice groups for an anthropology class project. During the project, we interviewed the co-founder of the Tampa chapter of Black Lives Matter, Olivia, and the co-founder of the White ally group Showing Up for Racial Justice, Damon. Olivia helped connect us to Damon and other people who participated in the video. She also connected us to a young, Black, local artist who made a song for the video and shot a music video with us. After this collaboration, I approached both Olivia and Damon about doing a research project about policing in Tampa Bay. They were both interested in supporting the project and helped get it off the ground. Unfortunately, the police in the area were less enthused and refused to give me a letter of support to interview police officers.

With no letter of support, I was not able to do the project. Thereafter, I mostly worked with Damon, as Olivia often travels around the country doing political work. Damon, who self-identifies as a White, gay man, helped as I switched my project to studying racial justice activism. He wrote a letter of support and has become a close friend. I am forever indebted to both Olivia and Damon for helping me with this research project.

As a researcher and activist I attended numerous public activist events communicated to me through word of mouth or on Facebook. Eventually, my presence became familiar at events and I was able to ask people to interview with me. The interviews pushed me farther into the activist community. At one interview, someone gave me petitions to circulate. At another, I was

asked to apply for a position in an organization. Once I applied for and received the position of secretary in the Restorative Justice Coalition, I worked closely with this organization as both an activist and a participant-observer. They are welcoming and patient with my many questions.

In this narrative, I show the memorial of Andrew Joseph, III as I experienced it, often describing the activists at the event by the race they identify as. This was a deliberate choice to reflect the importance of race to activists. In a small way, this word choice places readers into the reality and minds of these racial justice activists who see that much of one's life experiences and identities, whether through choice or not, is impacted by race. This is true both within and without the Tampa activist community.

I navigate the racial justice activist community as a White woman and a privileged graduate student who has become an insider. The movement is not homogenous and I'm one of many White people. I've witnessed Asian, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Black, indigenous, and White people involved in the Tampa racial justice activism community. As a White person I'm expected to defer to the experiences and leadership of people of color, listen to their opinions and support them through my labor. Damon attempted to explain the role of White people in the movement. He said,

This is a difficult thing to arrange in my mind, but there's conflict about colonizing.

There's too much whiteness, too many white people, white people moving to do this, and then there's not enough white people, white people should be doing the labor, and why aren't the white people doing this, and why are Black people forced to do this. You're not gonna win, so what you do is you do the best work you can do, you do the best work to your accountability partners, listen to other people, thank them for their feedback, and do what you do.

Purpose and Goals

I write about racial justice activism so that I can share the thought and culture of racial justice activists in Tampa Bay to the public. My goals are to make one group of activists known to readers so that popular narratives and ideas are not the sole references of what an activist is, and to impart their intellectual thought for others' benefit. My goal is to provide tools to dismantle power structures aimed at keeping only certain people in control. In choosing to "speak truth to the people" rather than to power, I show my faith in those without elite status or political power to affect change (Collins and González-Lopéz 2013, 37-38). Rather than potentially whitewashing my conclusions to make them palatable to the powerful – academics, politicians, White people – I write for the people and advocates who can use what they learn from this paper in their own communities. This research is valuable not only to document contemporary activism, but also to teach about activism and antiracism to others (Rodriguez 1998, 96). This is in keeping with the values of both activist anthropology and the culture of Tampa's racial justice activist community.

Who are these activists in Tampa Bay and why do they voluntarily engage in activism? This paper considers some aspects of their culture to answer this question. Engagement seems to be a choice that leads them to time consuming and emotionally exhausting work and forces them to publicly question the status quo. I argue that activists are much more complex than what is typically featured in the news. Activists participate in a myriad of actions with the goal of changing minds, changing policies, educating, healing, and ultimately improving their community. Tampa activists' tactics and actions are collectively considered. My research has shown that they are motivated by various ideologies, two of which I will examine in this paper,

and by their sense of injustice either learned from those around them or from personal experiences with racism and other forms of discrimination.

The following paper integrates literature, theory, and fieldwork in each chapter in order to describe and analyze a cohesive picture of the Tampa activist community. In the next chapter, “Conceptualizing Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought,” I will discuss the frameworks guiding this analysis – critical race theory and Black feminist thought – which examine the social construction of race and the real world implications of racial identity. In chapter three, “Deep Hanging Out: Methods and Structure in the Activist Community,” I discuss how the research was gathered and offer an overview of the community’s structure as a movement of social transformation. Then chapter four, “Motivations,” moves into a discussion of myriad reasons people become racial justice activists. The chapter also discusses literature and outside information that add context to the motivations activists cite. Chapter five, “Anti-Racist Ideology” examines the antiracist ideologies that pervade the community and direct activists’ resistance – anti-capitalism and intersectionality. “Acts of Resistance,” chapter six, shows how activists choose to overtly or covertly resist what they see as injustices, as well as intragroup behaviors that also serve as acts of resistance. In chapter seven I offer a conclusion of the study and recommendations for further steps.

Conceptualizing Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought

A major focus of both this research project and the Tampa activist community is the complex nature of race. The concept of race and the way in which race is navigated both in academia and in the activist community that is the focus of this project deserves a thorough examination. I find that combining the theories of critical race theory and Black feminist thought allows for an understanding of both how activists conceptualize race and how I will analyze their conceptualizations and experiences. These theories will frame the results and discussions throughout the paper.

Critical race theorist Faye Harrison describes racism as a subtle and “complex social force” whereby policies and cultural values can work to harm people of certain races automatically, whether or not there is a conscious intention to do so (Collins 2014; Harrison 1998; Harrison 2013). Racial justice as I have observed in the Tampa activist community fieldsite is resistance to prevailing “complex social forces” and systems of power, which include cultural values, economic systems, learned biases, and institutions that disproportionately harm people because of their racial identities. Racial justice works to correct the imbalance of power between people of different races, specifically to end White supremacy and improve the lives of people of color through the end of racism.

Peggy McIntosh argues that racism acts as not only a disadvantage to people of color, but also as an excessive advantage for White people (McIntosh 2015, 241) whose lives are considered inherently valuable (Wise 2011, 3). This extends to other forms of discrimination, such as sexism and trans discrimination. McIntosh writes,

As I see it, there is a hypothetical line of social justice running parallel to the ground. Below it people or groups are pushed down in a variety of ways. Above it, people and groups are pushed upward in a variety of ways. I believe that all of us have a combination of experiences that place us both above and below the hypothetical line of social justice (McIntosh 2015, 239).

Drawing on such conclusions of other critical race theorists, Harrison writes, “Racist beliefs about blackness are embedded in a system of material relations that produces and reproduces taken-for-granted power and privileges, such as those associated with whiteness” (Harrison 1998, 612). Racism is rooted and thus normalized in the structure of society, interacting with class, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and other identities (Carbado and Roithmayer 2014, 151; Delgado and Stefancic 2013, 3; Harris 2013; 255; Harrison 1998).

Critical race theory accepts that biologically, race does not exist (Kuzawa and Sweet 2009, 4). Rather, race is a social construction (Kuzawa and Sweet 2009, 4; Carbado and Roithmayer 2014, 115). Gravlee defines race as a “worldview,” a social construct that was uniquely created out of and still embedded in historic, social, political, and economic circumstances in North America (Gravlee 2008, 3). Ideas about different races get mapped onto the bodies and behaviors of people, bringing with them differences in treatment between perceived races. Like other socially constructed identities, race consequently alters over time and across locations, changing meanings and affecting inequalities depending on context (Kuzawa and Sweet 2009, 4; Carbado and Roithmayer 2014, 115). This critical race theory assertion ties in well with Black Feminist thought and intersectionality, which will be discussed below, is a major focus of Black Feminist thought.

Critical race theory is a “discourse of liberation” (Parker and Lynn 2002, 7) that began after the perceived slowdown of racial progress after the civil rights era in the 1960s (Delgado and Stefancic 2013, 2). Then and now, critical race theorists recognize the normalcy of racism in America and critique laws that treat Blacks and Whites as equals, remarking that this does nothing to improve the every-day treatment of racial minorities (Delgado and Stefancic 2013, 3). Perrius, quoted in “Decolonizing School Systems: Racial Justice, Radical Healing, and Educational Equity inside Oakland Unified School District,” argues that solutions should not be implemented universally as people experience racism and structural violence in different ways (Chatmon and Watson 2018, 8). Rather, policies should be targeted to reach *goals* that are universal (Chatmon and Watson 2018, 8).

In the discussion above, one can see that critical race theory legitimates activists’ recognition of the existence of racism as a fact. This allows me to better understand their worldview and subsequently their words and actions. Like critical race theorists, the Tampa activist community recognizes racism as both a mental/social construct and an institutional reality, and believes these biases are rooted in colonial history, the economic system of capitalism, and the continued legacy of transatlantic slavery. Critical race theory also helps me to understand experiences that activists in the Tampa community have had. As will become clear in this research paper, many activists reported having policing, racism, and discrimination impact their lives in negative ways. Critical race theory offers an analytical view of how racism plays out in society. Through my research I can now understand how it impacts individuals.

Black feminist thinker and critical race theorist Patricia Hill Collins theorizes at the intersection of gender and race, a theme widespread in both activism and in this research project (Collins 2014). These identities can be widened to include the intersections of ethnicity,

sexuality, class, religion, etc. Black feminist thought offers a valuable perspective on intersectional identities and resistance of those with less power (Collins 2014). Collins writes that suppression of Black women's agency is perpetuated through economic means, delegitimization of lived experience through the dominant ideology, and suppression of Black women's engagement in politics (Collins 2014, 4-5). By entering into activism, Black women resist the status quo. Despite the institutions and ideologies of oppression, many Black women have succeeded in challenging the discourse and making their voices heard (Collins 2014, 3). Collins wrote that, "African-American women's intellectual work has aimed to foster Black women's activism" (Collins 2014, 3). Black feminist thought as an area of social study has historically been developed in order to understand institutional racism and emancipate Black women from oppression (Collins 2014, 9).

The concept of intersectionality will be discussed in depth later in this paper, but it is important to touch on intersectionality and the weight that activists give to the intersections of identity and the ways these intersections impact lives. Intersectionality as a framework reminds activists and academics of the significance of individuals' identities (Janes and Corbett 2009, 171). Anthropologists must acknowledge how identities such as race, gender, sexuality, trans-status, physical ability, class, etc. mediate oppression, institutions, and individual experiences (Janes and Corbett 2009, 171). The activists I have worked with in Tampa do more than acknowledge the intersections of identity – they integrate this concept into many aspects of their work including self-governance, leadership, and advocacy choices. Intersectionality also emphasizes lived experience, accepting that all people have experienced legitimate and different realities (Collins 2012, 444). The concept of lived experience is integral to Black feminist

thought and to the ways in which this paper will analyze discrimination, structural violence, and how activists choose to carry out a racial justice movement.

Feminist ethnography operationalizes Black feminist thought because it pays special attention to power and dominance, and the experiences of those at the margins (Davis and Craven 2016, 11). Racial justice activism, which confronts other identity-based discrimination in addition to race, aligns well with feminist ethnography, which as previously mentioned, recognizes race, gender, and class, among other identities as interconnected and related to how people are treated (Harrison 2013, 7). Researchers employing a feminist methodology focus on the lived experiences of people, relying on empathy to respectfully interact with cultural interlocutors and serve their needs (Stacey 1988, 21-22). Feminist methodology was used during this research project to those ends. This allowed me to gain rapport in the Tampa activist community, guided me in interactions with Tampa activists, and enabled me to represent them respectfully.

The concept of lived experience ties in greatly with the actions and ideologies of racial justice activists, many of whom have lived as marginalized people, whether because of race, sexuality, homelessness, poor mental health, gender, etc. Lived experience will be addressed specifically in the chapter entitled “Motivations,” though readers will find how the concept of lived experience influences activism throughout this paper. Activists in this study recognize the value and give priority to the lived experiences of people, making this methodology all the more pertinent. Lived experience is typically seen as tied up in identity, knowledge, opinions, and what a person can bring to the table as an expert of their own lives. The intersections of “social locations,” culturally constructed identities such as race and sexuality, influence lived experiences, the meanings of which should be acknowledged as dynamic within social contexts

(Janes and Corbett 2009; Brown 2005, 248). Conversations and interviews during data collection and during analysis, I was able to treat the experiences and thoughts activists told me about as legitimate because they are the experts of their own lives. I present their experiences to readers as such.

I utilize feminist ethnography as an applied anthropologist and activist anthropologist. This is because feminist scholars actively produce work that is intended to question injustice, recognize power structures, and produce results that benefit communities and people (Davis and Craven 2016, 11). Some scholars of feminist activist ethnography acknowledge that such a methodology may be less objective, but can also be more scientific because such researchers are more committed to the issue (Harrison 2013, 8). They argue that feminist activist researchers can be more “conscientious,” careful, and accurate because of our commitment (Harrison 2013, 8). Moreover, “[t]o attempt neutrality... means to align oneself, by default, with the institutional structures that discriminate against and exploit” (Leacock 1987 quoted in Harrison 2013, 8).

In sharing the culture of Tampa racial justice activists, I am working towards acknowledging the work activists have done, sharing the hardships of marginalized people, and righting the misconceptions the public may hold about activists. Moreover, this methodology works toward an egalitarian relationship between the researcher and cultural interlocutors, a social organization that is highly compatible with the Tampa activist culture (Stacey 1988, 21).

Encouraging Reflexivity

At the 2017 American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Washington D.C. in a session entitled “Until We All Get Free: Black Feminist Leadership and Organizing within The Movement for Black Lives,” I listened as local activists and anthropologists discussed recent racial activism. Elle Hearn, a Black trans woman who founded the Marsha P. Johnson Institute

and the Black Lives Matter Global Network, said that anthropologists should not be studying Black people; we should be studying ourselves. The lively audience responded with laughter, myself included.

This was a provocative statement to me that deals with both ownership of experience and narrative and the need to be reflective. As a White anthropologist studying activists, many of whom are Black or other people of color, this was a critique I felt personally as well as one that is at odds with the belief in the discipline that anthropologists are well-skilled to analyze and understand people different from us. This is certainly a statement that merits thought within the discipline, and reminds anthropologists that activists of any race have much to teach anthropologists. For instance, I can recognize the hypocrisy of analyzing the words and intention of Elle Hearn and perhaps “speaking for” her and other activists in the Tampa community in this paper. It is a reminder to me and all anthropologists that the ownership of peoples’ experiences and narratives belong to them and could be unintentionally analyzed in a way the “owner” does not agree.

Anthropology research practices give primacy to those who have personally experienced the topic the anthropologist is studying (Stacey 1988, 21-22). Interviewees are asked to speak extensively about their own lived experiences and opinions. This is a characteristic shared in activist culture and I believe a major reason that anthropology can excel in activist anthropology. Activist anthropology also questions existing power structures, writes for the people – not just the elite, advocates on behalf of those it studies, and collaborates with the community (Collins and Gonzalez-Lopez 2013, 41). However, anthropology can deviate from valuing cultural interlocutors as equal to the research to perceiving anthropological work as unequivocally more authoritative and legitimate than the people whose experiences they analyze.

In the Tampa, Florida activist spaces, ownership of experiences and stories are contested. Who has the right and expertise to speak on behalf others? Activism typically answers, “the individual is the authority on their own experiences, and should be given the right to speak on behalf of themselves.” This value is not always practiced, however. As in the case of the Showing Up for Racial Justice and Black Lives Matter partnership in Tampa, White allies were asked explicitly to “do the emotional labor” of teaching White people about racism and the experiences of people of color, though at the direction of Black activists.

Hearn was also promoting reflexivity, which is also an important element of activist anthropology. Many activists I have worked personally with stress self-education and awareness as a major component of activism. Learning about how your life relates to, impacts, and is more or less privileged than others helps activism become more successful and activists more respectful. As a White woman using a feminist perspective, it is vital for me to engage in reflexivity and consciously avoid essentializing activists’ experiences or assuming my experiences with sexism is representative of others (Harris 2013; hooks 2015). The combination of critical race theory and Black feminist thought has focused this analysis away from essentialism and towards an understanding of the various realities people experience. This is possible through embracing the authority of lived experience and the acknowledgement of race as influencing that experience.

As this discussion has shown, I wish to promote respect for others’ lived experiences and more activism in an academic space. Consistently respecting others’ lived experiences in academia is a form of activism. As the existence of scholars who embody both Black feminist thought and critical race theory into their work demonstrate, these two frameworks complement and build on each other (Harrison 1998; Collins 2014). I choose to combine them in this paper

because they work together to promote an activist and applied anthropology, breaking down the walls between the public and the academic. Moreover, many ways in which Tampa activists operate reflect an understanding of these two theoretical frameworks. The acceptance of these theories in the community makes the perspectives promoted in them useful for analyzing the culture of the activist community. The activists, for example, often define race in a way similar to scholars of both critical race theory and Black feminist thought: as a social construction with real world implications (Harrison 1998; Harris 2013).

Deep Hanging Out: Methods and Structure in the Activist Community

During the fall of 2017, from August until December, I interviewed eleven racial justice activists in cafés or their homes. I chose interviewees after becoming aware of their identity as a racial justice activist working for justice in Tampa Bay through a number of ways. Damon, Olivia, and/or other interviewees often identified people as racial justice activists to me. I also chose to interview activists who I recognized from events during participant observation, especially if they acted as leaders. I chose to interview leaders of groups including Organize Florida, Restorative Justice Coalition, Black Lives Matter, and Women’s March. I would characterize this method as non-probability sampling based on convenience and respondent driven sampling (Bernard 2011, 147).

Though demographics are much more complicated than labels can express, I will describe the activists I interviewed through the ways they self-identified during the interviews. A short discussion of the complex nature of demographic data is discussed in Appendix A. The interview sample was made up of eight women and three men. I interviewed one person identifying as biracial, one as Filipino, five as Black/African American, and four as White. Eight out of eleven respondents identify with an LGBTQ+ identity. Five respondents reported that they are panromantic/pansexual, though one reported she was both panromantic and a lesbian. Panromantic/pansexual is a sexual identity that means one is romantically and/or sexually attracted to others regardless of the potential partner(s) gender identity. The remaining three activists identifying as LGBTQ+ identified as gay, bisexual, or queer. The interviewees’ education levels range from “none,” which I believe means the interviewee did not graduate

from high school, to some graduate school. The activists' jobs include sex work, data analysis in a financial corporation, paid community organizing, and a desk job in human resources.

I have no hard data to discuss whether this sample is or is not representative of the activist community, but from my observations as a participant observer, the sample seems to be representative. The sample is indicative of the diversity of people who are drawn into racial justice activism and to the nature of the community's culture as accepting of identities and lifestyles that wider American culture does not accept. I believe that the sample's demographic diversity offers an opportunity to gather and interpret a wide range of peoples' experiences and identities and to understand how these people have come together as a racial justice activist community. For a detailed description and breakdown of the sample, refer to Appendix A.

The activists I interviewed all fall at various points on the far left of the political spectrum. The most liberal/left-leaning activists I interviewed follow Marxist thought and participate in the organization Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). For two reasons, this is not apparent in my interview data – this is information I have gleaned through participant observation. First, DSA is a relatively new organization originating in Tampa in 2017. The second reason is that I asked about political affiliation, not political philosophy, which I believe was a mistake. DSA is not a political party and many of the activists I interviewed identify as Democrats only in party affiliation, not in political philosophy (Democratic Socialists of America 2017). Rather than nominating their own candidate for the special election for Hillsborough County House District 58, DSA endorsed an independent who caucuses with the Green Party, Ahmad Hussam Saadaldin who won 9% of the vote (March 2017). Because Florida is a closed primary state, the activists who are registered Democrats can vote in the Democratic

primary, whether or not they agree with the Democratic Party's actions and values. Others identified as independents and Democrats.

Though I always came prepared with an interview script and began by asking uniform demographic questions about, for instance, the interviewee's race and age, as well as affiliations with activist groups, the interviews became relatively informal (Bernard 2011). As someone perceived as a White ally and an activist, though new to the community, I believe my interviewees felt relatively comfortable talking about their personal opinions and experiences. Some opened up to me about incredibly personal experiences they felt regretful or ashamed of. For example, one said, "I never told anybody this. This is something really bad." Others talked about accidentally or purposefully becoming involved in illegal activities, though I never specifically asked about illegal activities. No one who reported as being involved in an illegal activity will be identified by any name or organizational affiliation for their privacy and protection. All who I interviewed are referred to with pseudonyms. The only real names used are those of Andrew Joseph III and his parents.

During interviews I asked, "what is racial justice?" and "why are you involved?" among other questions about opinions and strategies on how to achieve racial justice. Because racial justice is often centered around police and criminal justice reform – though racism's reach is much farther than that – I asked directly about personal experiences with the criminal justice system and whether the activists saw those experiences as a motivation for their work. See Appendix B for a sample interview script.

It often felt like the activists were taking the interview with me as an opportunity to educate me. During my first interview, when I asked the woman I was interviewing of ways she would recruit people to racial justice activism, she threw my question back to me, "Well you tell

me. What are the best ways?” Sometimes, particularly the activists who I often saw taking the microphone at events and appear comfortable talking in crowds, answered my questions in a way that sounded practiced – they have a lot of experience carrying the same torch and explaining the same ideas. This is indicative of both the centrality of education in activism, as well as the idea that activism can and should be woven into everyday life. Many Tampa racial justice activists are activists at every opportunity. I believe the practice of using the interview as an opportunity to educate allowed me to see how activists speak both to outsiders and to new activists. Those who did not know me well – especially early in the research process – spoke to me in this way. The use of the interview as an opportunity to educate me has implications for the data that was gathered. Some activists of color reject that they should be obligated to teach White people about racism. A couple activists who believe this ignored my request for an interview, which means it is possible the sample fails to include activists of color who perhaps saw me as a White person who needs educating.

Partial transcriptions were made of each of the eleven interviews and were lightly edited to remove repetitive phrases such as, “like,” and “you know.” Transcriptions were read for themes within the topics of structure, motivations, ideologies, and acts of resistance. Detailed notes taken at (or after, if appropriate) participant observation were also read for these themes.

Deep Hanging Out

While the interviews were invaluable, the bulk of my qualitative data was gathered through participant observation. I characterize this as “deep hanging out” because of my dual role as activist and researcher (Geertz 1998). I have become deeply invested in this community that I have been a part of for more than a year. While I have acted as a participant observer, I have been guided by both my own passion for social justice and the expectations of other

activists to become involved in the efforts of the activists I study. Since I first became involved in the community in 2016, I spent increasingly more time floating among groups and projects before officially joining the Restorative Justice Coalition as the secretary, a grassroots organization that is dedicated to reforming police and the criminal justice system to implement restorative rather than punitive practices.

I spent upwards of 100 hours as a participant observer beginning in August of 2017 after receiving IRB approval until December of 2017, though my involvement with the community has continued. The spaces in which I acted as a participant observer were both public and private. Public spaces included county or city organized town halls, protests in front of government buildings and in the streets of Downtown Tampa and Ybor City, an emergency weather planning meeting, volunteering at the Tampa Hub for Irma Decentralized Response, workshops led by various activist groups, an art show, reading of demands outside police departments, and a visit to a store selling spiritual paraphernalia such as smudge sticks and gems. Private spaces included lobbying meetings with elected officials, board member meetings with the Restorative Justice Coalition, social gatherings such at the homes of activists, hours long impromptu discussions about race and activism, and a presentation to a church youth group. I acted as both a researcher and activist in these spaces. For example, I was one of three presenters at the church youth group meeting that taught teenagers how to practice restorative justice in their community.

Before I can adequately explain my process of participant observation, readers must first understand the organization and structure of the community I entered. Community as seen by its members is dynamic (Polanco 2014, 43). Gupta and Ferguson write that, “notions of locality or community refer both to a demarcated physical space *and* to clusters of interaction,” (Gupta and

Ferguson 1992, 7). The Tampa activist community, embedded in the larger Tampa community, is tied up in fluid identities, ideologies, interactions, and relationships. Gupta and Ferguson continue: “the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 7). Tampa activists make up a recognizable community whereby people identify as belonging to a local group through various means including shared ideology, lived experience, marginalization, motivation to action, and interaction in particular spaces. This paper will examine these aspects of the community as they are played out in the Tampa activist culture.

Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine in, “The Social Organization of a Movement of Revolutionary Change: Case Study, Black Power” introduced in 1970 a framework that is useful today to analyze the Tampa activist community (Gerlach and Hine 1970b). In this chapter, Gerlach and Hine discuss their framework called “Movements of Social Transformation.” They define social movements as typically having “segmentary, decentralized, and reticulate *organization*” (Gerlach and Hine 1970b, 387). This means that organizations and individuals in a social movement are structured into a local network of multiple groups working for a similar social transformation, but on different points of attack (Gerlach and Hine 1970b, 387). The Tampa racial justice activist community, while nominally comprised of more than twenty organizations, is not clearly divided along organizational lines. Rather, it is comprised of a network of relationships, which facilitates collaboration and information flow across organizations and individuals.

The racial justice activist groups based in Tampa are part of a large network of activists, with no real hierarchy, and with many specialized sections, which Gerlach and Hine describe as

characteristics of a movement of social transformation (Gerlach and Hine 1970b, 387). They wrote that recruitment to the social movement “exploits pre-existing social networks” (Gerlach and Hine 1970b, 387). This also clearly occurs in the Tampa activist communities, because activists will find themselves attached to more and more projects as their friends and connections in one group recruit them to volunteer on other projects. Activists also recruit from their non-activist social groups to bring them into the fold.

I experienced this recruitment during my fieldwork. As I was entering the activist community, I began unaffiliated and attended actions inconsistently. Once my research officially started, I began building relationships with activists and showing up for many public events surrounding racial justice. I attended events various organizations’ events, such as protests, town halls, and vigils. Once my presence became familiar and I was seen as a friend and “comrade,” a co-founder of Restorative Justice Coalition asked me to apply for the open secretary position. My constant note-taking at events may have made me seem ideal for the job, as well as my new friendship with the other co-founder who had helped me to get my research underway.

Once I was accepted as secretary of the Restorative Justice Coalition, I became involved in the strategizing and planning of “actions.” I participated in a wider range of activities, including lobbying the mayor of Plant City during a lunch meeting at the Colombia restaurant in Ybor City, attending an art show of a Black woman who uses art and spirituality as activism, meeting with State Attorney Andrew Warren to advocate for a victim of police brutality, and voicing my opinions in organizational meetings. In this way I morphed from just “floating” between Black Lives Matter, Showing Up for Racial Justice, Restorative Justice Coalition, Organize Florida, and other organizations to being a more official member in the community. Because the activist community is a network of various groups and individuals, other activists

asked me to help outside of the Restorative Justice Coalition’s activities. I worked for an activist’s campaign for Hillsborough County Commission, I gathered signatures for the Rights Restoration petition, and I attended meetings of the Tampa chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America.

As you can see above from my experience entering the community and working with multiple groups, it would be impossible to classify activists’ affiliations in neat boxes. When I asked activists, “What groups do you organize with?” one activist mentioned ten different groups, others only mentioned one or even none. Perhaps the vagueness of the question (what does “organize” mean?) or the nature of networks of relationships in the community explain this. One does not need to be a member of an organization to be an activist. However, most of the activists I interviewed attend events of groups they did not mention or mentioned groups that were largely inactive. Since interviewing these people, organizations have come and gone, such as Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), which suffered due to issues between members of the leadership and dissolved. It now exists mostly as a Facebook page that promotes other groups’ events and the activists who led SURJ have moved to other groups or even created their own organizations. I describe this to emphasize the ever-changing nature of activism in Tampa as it responds to political events, individual’s passions, and publicity of certain social issues. For example, pro-Palestine/anti-Israel movements have gained much more attention and popularity in racial justice activism in 2018. Black Lives Matter groups across the country have been calling for justice in Palestine for years, but the uptick may be the result of the Trump administration recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (Tarnopolsky 2018).

Gerlach and Hine describe movements of social transformation as centering on, “a change oriented and action-motivating *ideology* which transcends mere self-interest and offers

(a) a vision of a better future, (b) heightened self-esteem, (c) a cognitive “filter” through which “objectively” negative feedback can be converted into positive reinforcement, proving that the movement is right” (Gerlach and Hine 1970, 387). The ideologies that are central to the racial justice activist community are predicated on the well-documented belief that people of color (people who are not White), are discriminated against by the government and American society. Activists see the racism people of color endure as rooted in history, policy, institutions, and capitalism. They believe that their lives and their experiences are not valued like those of White people in America. This also extends to other types of discrimination, such as discrimination experienced by immigrants, Muslims, women, and LGBTQ+ people.

The ideologies Tampa racial justice activists see as bringing about change and justice I call anti-capitalist and intersectional ideologies. Further discussion of ideology will be undertaken in a later chapter. My experience with these ideologies as a participant observer changed throughout months of fieldwork as I came to learn about the reasoning for the ideologies and integrated them into my own thinking as an activist. I imagine other activists had similar learning experiences as they became more involved in the community. Ideologies mediate the way people understand and react to information. Continuing from an above example, I have seen how Tampa activists have processed knowledge about injustices in Palestine through their ideologies and have successfully spread this knowledge throughout the group. Activists continue to call for American divestment in Israel, an expression of anti-capitalism, but only recently has it become common for activists to condemn the use of the word “Israel” in referring to the country. Sometimes they put the word in quotes, use all lowercase letters when writing it, and speak about the Israeli military as the “zionist army.” The intersectional ideology supports this interpretation and thus fits within the framework already widely accepted. Intersectional

values condemn legitimizing oppressors and promote lifting up the perspective of the oppressed, thus many activists in Tampa believe that using the word “Israel” is racist and oppressive to Palestinians because it is seen as accepting Israel as a legitimate country rather than an oppressor. As a researcher I analyzed these ideologies from both the insider perspective I learned as an activist and an outsider perspective, aiming to see how these ideologies manifest and are discussed.

Motivations

“I keep my registration and my insurance up in my visor so I don’t ever have to put my hands where they can’t see them, cause I ain’t getting killed that way.”

Sam

Activism is a socially uncomfortable, emotionally draining, potentially life threatening, and time consuming commitment. Those who choose to be activists are choosing to go against the prevailing status quo, a potentially culturally dissonant choice. Why then do people choose to become activists, or do they even have a choice if advocacy is necessary in their lives? In this section, it becomes clear that direct and indirect experiences with discrimination, particularly discrimination on basis of race and experiences with violence because of race influences becoming an activist. A sense of injustice of their own treatment and/or the treatment other people experience motivate activists to engage in activism. I argue that these experiences are learning experiences that taught activists about the real impacts of racism and conjure up a sense of injustice.

Many activists talk about a sense of duty to change issues that do not necessarily impact just themselves. Referring to shifting her focus from environmental issues to racial justice, one activist said, “there’s definitely one issue that needs more people to be present. And that’s why I’ve decided to give more of my time to racial justice issues.” She believes not enough activism is focused on racial justice and as a result feels a responsibility to lend her efforts in order to advance the movement.

There is a high rate of LGBTQ+ individuals who identify as activists, but do not feel discriminated against because of their race. Out of eleven interviews, I interviewed eight activists who identify with LGBTQ+. Four of these are White activists. This observation suggests that experiencing discrimination in general motivates people to become racial justice activists, perhaps because they learned about discrimination through their own experiences and/or because they can identify with people who also face discrimination. The following pages will discuss how learning experiences with racism in particular served as motivating and educating opportunities for activists to engage with racial justice.

Racism as a Real Threat in the Literature

The criminal justice system marginalizes Blacks in many of the same ways legal segregation did, using incarceration as a form of social control (Alexander 2010, 4). She shows that massive incarceration of Black people came about through a history of oppression through slavery, the Jim Crow era, and now (Alexander 2010). The policing and criminal justice that Black people experience is only the newest iteration of racist and oppressive past injustices (Alexander 2010). Policing disproportionately affects marginalized groups such as immigrants, the impoverished, people of color, and the homeless (Hayle, Wortley, and Tanner 2016, 323). According to scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor “[e]specially when the police are involved, looking Black is more likely to get you killed than any other factor” (Taylor 2016, 13). Racial discrimination in policing is not a new topic or phenomenon (Boyd 1981; Alexander 2010). Sociologist Ronnie Dunn characterized it as, “among the most persistent and seemingly obstinate social dilemmas in American society” (Dunn 2016, 959). Incarceration has far reaching consequences. It stigmatizes those labeled as “criminals” and removes many freedoms, including the ability to participate in normal family activities, to vote, to find employment, to rent an

apartment, and to take out a loan (Stevenson 2014, 15-16). America is plagued by a legacy of discrimination toward people of color and police over-militarization in general (Kraska 2001).

Examining the system as a whole, Chris Hayes in *Colony in a Nation* argues that the American criminal justice system is not a racist monolith, rather it is two systems, “two distinct regimes” (Hayes 2017, 34). The criminal justice system for “the Nation,” the occupiers, is democratic, while the criminal justice system for “the Colony,” the occupied, has elements of a dictatorial police state, “A place where the law is a tool of control rather than a foundation for prosperity” (Hayes 2017, 35).

Evidence for racially biased policing can be found in police departments’ own databases (Legewie 2016; Smith and Holmes 2014). Cities with a greater proportion of Black and Hispanic residents have more complaints about police using force against residents than those with a greater proportion of White residents (Smith and Holmes 2014, 93), which suggests that police use force more often with Black and Hispanic people than White people. In the days following a shooting death of a police officer by a Black person in New York City, the use of force on Blacks increases by as much as 16% (Legewie 2016, 381). Conversely, the use of force against White and Hispanic people in New York City does not change following a White or Hispanic person shooting a police officer (Legewie 2016, 381). The Sentencing Project, a research and prison reform advocacy organization, reports that a Black man has a one in three chance that he will be incarcerated at some point in his life, while a White man has a one in 17 chance and a Latino man a one in six chance (*The Sentencing Project* 2017). Hayes’ discussion of the concept of law and order suggests that in addition to the legacy of racism and oppression, overpolicing and incarceration stem from a desire for orderliness of “the Colony,” the meaning of which is determined by the authorities of “the Nation” (Hayes 2017, 9, 27-30).

Research that relies on qualitative data also demonstrates police discrimination against people of color (Rios 2011; Boyle 2004). Victor Rios acted as a participant-observer with Latino and Black boys in Oakland, California, whom he argued were unfairly stereotyped as criminals because of their identities (Rios 2011). He was told of and witnessed many occasions where police unfairly profiled, arrested, and harassed children of color living in Oakland (Rios 2011). These practices cause far-reaching consequences. One participant, Tyrell, reported he began being beaten and stopped by the police, who would search him for drugs and guns, at age twelve (Rios 2011, 50). Criminalizing children and people of color becomes a “self fulfilling prophecy,” whereby more Black and Latino people are arrested for drug crimes because they are stopped more often than White people (Ioimo, Tears, Meadows, Becton, and Charles 2007, 272). Eventually Tyrell decided to sell drugs and fulfill the belief police had of him (Rios 2011, 50). He felt he couldn’t control his appearance or the way people stereotyped him, but he did feel he could make the choice to sell drugs (Rios 2011, 50-51). Rios writes, “if certain social contexts breed criminality, then certain social contexts breed criminalization” (Rios 2011, 47).

The government authorizes and legitimizes discrimination through the passage of policies. For example, the 1996 Supreme Court ruling *Whren v. United States* allows police greater liberty to stop civilians for even minor traffic violations, increasing the legal ability of the police to wage the War on Drugs, a “war” that Tampa activists are adamantly against (Katz 2016, 928). This ruling allows officers to use “pretextual stops” instead of probable cause when deciding to pull a driver over (Dunn 2016, 960). Thus, some scholars argue this increases stops based on racial profiling (Dunn 2016; Katz 2016) or “driving while Black” (Ioimo, Tears, Meadows, Becton, and Charles 2007, 271). Racial profiling is defined as, “the use of race as the principal or key factor used by the police for stopping, questioning, searching, or arresting

someone, rather than the use of ‘reasonable suspicion’” (Wilson, Wilson, and Malane 2015, 483). While it is untrue that people of color commit more drug crimes than White people, many officers believe this to be true, and thus stop them more often (Ioimo, Tears, Meadows, Becton, and Charles 2007, 272). Racial profiling is so widespread that 1 out of 9 Americans have been victims (Amnesty International 2004) and individuals in Black communities are more likely to think the police treat them worse than White people (Wilson, Wilson, and Malane 2015, 484).

The question of why racism pervades policing and the criminal justice system as a whole is a well-studied one. Research strongly suggests that policing attracts officers who erase the experiences of people of different races by claiming they are “colorblind” or blind to race (Hughes et al. 2016). Moreover, the training process of new recruits appears to promote these forms of racism (Anthony-Davis 1993). One study found that 21% of police officers in Virginia reported that they felt biased policing was condoned by the departments in which they work (Ioimo, Tears, Meadows, Becton, and Charles 2007, 284). The U.S. Department of Justice reported in 2010 that Black police officers make up approximately 12% of police forces (Wilson, Wilson, and Thou 2015, 486). It is likely that their perceptions of racially biased policing differ from their White counterparts.

In a sample of 102 African American officers, researchers found 89% of males agreed that racial profiling exists in their departments, while 100% of women agreed with that statement (Wilson, Wilson, and Thou 2015, 491). A smaller number of the sample of Black men, 64%, believed that this profiling was condoned, while again, 100% of the women believed it was condoned (Wilson, Wilson, and Thou 2015, 491). Moreover, media representations of criminals often reinforce the belief in the criminality of Black people by featuring lawbreakers more often

as African Americans, which some suggest increases the racially disparate policing, arresting, and incarcerating of people of color (Wilson, Wilson, and Thou 2015, 485).

The activists I studied in Tampa are aware the type of research mentioned above and use such research while advocating for racial justice. During community workshops and lobbying meetings with politicians, activists demonstrate their knowledge about racism. The web resource, *The Sentencing Project*, is often referred to for quick facts about racism in the criminal justice system (Sentencing Project 2017). *The Sentencing Project* shares both quick statistics and analyses of racism in the criminal justice system, such as demonstrating that a Black man has a one in four chance of going to jail in his life. *Campaign Zero* is another web resource that offers specific policy suggestions for criminal justice reform, such as recommending that police officers wear dashboard and/or body cameras the footage of which must not be used with facial recognition software, and compares how and where such changes have been put into practice (Campaign Zero 2018).

Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim* and Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th* are frequently mentioned as informative and integral learning material for all people – activists, politicians, the public at large (Alexander 2012; DuVernay 2016). They are often brought up as evidence of pervasive and intentional racism and are recommended reading or watching, particularly during lobbying meetings with policymakers. Alexander shows how the American criminal justice system is an institution of social control intended to oppress people on basis of their race (Alexander 2012) while DuVernay's *13th* documents the long history of oppression, particularly through an analysis of policies (DuVernay 2016). These and other resources shape activists' knowledge and recommendations.

Racism as a Real Threat in Tampa Bay

Patricia Hill Collins writes, “oppression describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society” (Collins 2014, 4). Taking a wider perspective, bell hooks writes that, “Being oppressed is the *absence of choices*” (hooks 2015, 5). Through policy and policing, the state attempts to oppress people of color by denying them their freedom, civil rights, education, and economic and social opportunity (Alexander 2012). Many of the experiences with racism that the activists in my research faced and continue to face were violent and within the criminal justice system, particularly with police officers. Policing of Black bodies as a form of oppression has a long history in Florida, where criminalization of Black youth, physical brutality, and death were used as tools of control, such as at the Dozier School for Boys (Jackson 2016).

Black communities in Tampa Bay have historically faced the negative effects of racism from their inception, such as segregation and gentrification encouraged by the state (Jackson 2010, 81-82). This legacy continues. It has been well documented that racism is thriving in policing in Tampa. After acting as a participant-observer in the training program for new police recruits in Tampa, anthropologist Anthony-Davis discovered a prevalence of racism towards African Americans, particularly in the form of unfair and negligent service to their communities (Anthony-Davis 1993). In 2015, the Justice Department found that 80% of cyclists in Tampa given tickets were Black (Butler 2015), despite Black residents making up only approximately 26% of the Tampa City population (Census 2010). More recently, the Tampa Bay Times released a series of interactive media and articles regarding the police use of firearms in Florida (Montgomery et al. 2017). According to this report, police shot 28 civilians between 2009 and 2014 in the city of Tampa, and 39 in Hillsborough County total (Montgomery et al. 2017). In

Hillsborough County 41% of civilians shot by police were White and 38% were Black (Montgomery et al. 2017), though the percent of White civilians in the county is 70% and the percent of Black civilians is 16% (US Census 2010).

The March 2018 “Report to the Tampa Citizens Review Board” shows a racial disparity in how Tampa resident respondents to a survey thought about the police (Heydari and Le Grand 2018). When asked the question, “Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way the Tampa Police Department is doing its job?” 73.22% of White respondents approved, while 50.77% of nonwhite respondents approved and 40.7% of Black respondents approved (Heydari and Le Grand 2018, 6). When asked, “How much would you say that TPD officers treat people of all races and ethnicities equally?” 23% of Black respondents said “not at all,” while only 8.16% of White respondents said “not at all” (Heydari and Le Grand 2018, 26). There is also a racial disparity for respondents who chose the answer “a great deal” (Heydari and Le Grand 2018, 26). These selected references show that racial injustice in America and Tampa specifically is a real problem that racial justice activists are grappling with. Both academic literature and experiences of these activists confirm this.

Institutional racism as defined in the context of American society is, “the policies, programs, and practices of public and private institutions that result in greater rates of poverty, dispossession, criminalization, illness, and ultimately mortality of African Americans” (Taylor 2016, 8). Policing and the criminal justice system is one aspect of institutional racism that I will be focusing on for a few reasons. First, the recent deaths of Black people by the hands of the police are both highly-publicized and reflective of the lives of my research participants. This topic is often brought up as the most urgent issue. Second, the criminal justice system degrades the communities, health, livelihoods, and freedoms of people of color (Alexander 2012; Kuzawa

and Sweet 2009; Gravlee 2008), which activists are well aware. Finally, I approached this research project with the question “to what extent do activists’ experiences with the criminal justice system shape their involvement with activism?” I found that their experiences with the criminal justice system inform their understanding of what racism is and its effects. I found that for some people, these experiences motivated them to participate in activism, while others felt the opposite effect. Those who felt motivated by these experiences felt that they and others in their lives had experienced fixable injustice, while activists who felt dissuaded from racial justice activism mostly struggled with fear of police and mental health.

Motivating Experiences with Racism

“I do this for all the Black men in my family.”

Lily

Isoke advocates for viewing people as intersectional beings who enter activism for personal reasons (Isoke 2013, 15-16). I found that many of the reasons for entering racial justice came because of a sense of injustice regarding treatment of selves and others, often stemming from negative experiences in the criminal justice. Perhaps because I asked questions about police in particular or perhaps because racism in the criminal justice system is highly visible and has dire consequences, such as death and loss of agency, racism in criminal justice seemed to be a highly motivating factor to be an activist. This is not unique to Tampa (Valentine and Valentine 1970). For example, a Black community organizing a movement in a metropolitan area in the United States perceived that, “the same policemen who are so zealous in violently breaking up political demonstrations generally fail to protect householders, prevent muggings, or control the drug racket” (Valentine and Valentine 1970, 401). In this specific movement, activists advocated

for education, healthcare, and an end to police “preying” on the community (Valentine and Valentine 1970, 401).

Activists expressed other reasons for getting involved in racial justice, which include feelings of duty, self- and outside pressure to use their privilege, fear for themselves and others, feelings that the work can be achieved, desires to improve their and other’s lives, the feeling that this issue is dire, and an understanding of racism as an institutionalized and systemic problem permeating all aspects of American government and society. For example Meg said, “I worked on the [issues] that I saw as most feasible to achieve, so I continued working on a lot of these issues and it just moved into racial justice organizing because I have the time and ability to do so.” Activists also talk about the responsibility to use their privilege to improve society, whether they are White or not. Because negative feelings and experiences with the criminal justice system were a major theme throughout interviews, this section will largely focus on that theme. Almost all of the people I interviewed had a negative experience with the police or the criminal justice system despite their race, though the experiences of participants of color tended to be more violent. I argue that these experiences and the publicized experiences of others teach activists about racism and galvanize them to act through a sense of injustice.

One activist, Anabella has had negative experiences with the police, including one where her door was “busted” down by police looking for a drug dealer. Seeing her brother’s face in the window, “[the police] thought [my brother] was the guy that they were looking for, this like maybe two year old kid.” She explained this happened, “because they saw a Black face and it was just like all Black faces look the same.” After the recorder was off, Anabella told me that her biggest fear is the death of her brother at the hands of the police. However, she is not motivated

only by experiences that harm her and her family. Rather, she said she feels like she has a duty to be an activist and change issues that do not impact just her.

Two women talked about how the criminal justice system was stacked against their fathers and other Black men in their families. A man who Lily believes is in the KKK and who had previously been dating her father's girlfriend threatened her father, a Black man. This White man followed her father and threatened him with a gun. Invoking the Stand Your Ground law, Lily's dad shot the man. The wound was not fatal and Lily's father called the police to let them know what happened. She said that the man who followed her father did not get in trouble, but "fortunately with a lot of energy work and prayer and good attorneys, [my dad] spent three years in jail and I think has to pay 60,000 dollars restitution." Lily's analysis was that, "Stand Your Ground is a law that protects White men."

Her nineteen-year-old cousin was also incarcerated in what she believes was a racially motivated sentencing. She reports that he was the only Black teenager out of four teenagers involved in stealing money from a friend's parent and he was waiting outside when the robbery occurred. Her cousin was the only one who was convicted. He died in prison and his death was never investigated, so Lily's family is not aware of the circumstances. She believes, "this [system] is created to ensure that people of color are kept contained and are murdered in a way that's legal."

Cassandra also lost a family member to the criminal justice system in a way that was deemed legal. Her father, a Black man, was living on the streets and was shot and killed by a police officer. As she described it,

A police officer cornered him behind this building and of course we only have the police officer's testimony, but supposedly my father threatened him with a cinderblock, which is

ridiculous because you know how heavy a cinderblock is. Even if someone threw it, it won't hit you. You can dodge a cinderblock, but he shot my dad in the abdomen and killed him and he was the only one on scene. He was the only one that was there. There was a woman later on who was a witness that my aunt found, but they were never able to get a lawyer to take the case, but she also said that she saw the cop and the cop threatened her to go back inside.

It is clear Cassandra sees this as an unjust act of racism. For a newspaper clipping describing the death of Cassandra's father, see Appendix C.

During an interview, Jada, asked me a question: "How old were you the first time you were assaulted by the police?" Having never been assaulted by the police, I did not have an answer. Jada said, "I got slammed on the ground by a resource officer at Madison Middle School in South Tampa. He thought he fucked me up pretty bad, so I got let off with a warning. For talking back to him, he slammed me on the ground. 12 years old. That was my first time." Another time she was assaulted by an officer was at Southern Nights, a club in Ybor City. Jada told me that because it was a Black night, it was over-policed. She had been told to get off the sidewalk or she would be trespassing, but she was waiting for her ride to pick her up. When an officer blew his whistle in Jada's ear, she asked for his badge number. He grabbed her arm and threw her into a window and then onto the ground. A friend who tried to defend her was also thrown to the ground and began bleeding from her head. Having just returned from her first deployment with the military, Jada said, "It was a earth shattering thing to come back from my first deployment and remember that the police in my city still treat me like I'm nothing. We were celebrating making it back home alive, making it back home to our city and we were treated by TPD like we were Black people."

Sam, a Filipino American said, “I called somebody because somebody broke into my car. TPD shows up and tells me to put my hands up, like I answer the door and he tells me to like show my hands, he had his hand on his holster, I was like oh shit, alright. Cool.” This activist also described feeling harassed by police during traffic stops. He reported being pulled over twice in the same stretch of road for a broken headlight. Once Sam was stopped because an officer claimed he smelled marijuana. He was held on the side of the road for an hour as the police officer searched his car, eventually failing to find any drugs.

Activists also learn about racism indirectly. Though one activist said she’s never had a negative experience with police, she still recognizes the racism that pervades the criminal justice system. She said, “It’s sad, I have to remind [my son]. I feel like I’m taking away his dignity to say ‘hey.’ To remind you that you are a young Black man and that you have to really be aware of that at all times.” Media is a motivating factor because many activists are bombarded with videos that show police officers planting drugs and shooting unarmed civilians, among other events. This elicits compassion for the victims and feelings of frustration and indignation at the witnessed injustices.

Some activists reported reading about civil rights history or engaging with Facebook groups to learn. The group Unpacking Racism 201 is one such forum. On this page, people can read and ask questions about the experiences of people who identify as Roma, Black, Asian, Muslim, Native American, and any other marginalized ethnic or racial group (Unpacking Racism 201 2018). People identifying as such post personal experiences and knowledge and their PayPal account, urging White readers to pay posters as a form of reparations and compensation for emotional/mental labor (Unpacking Racism 201 2018). This is a learning experience in which activists are able to understand other people’s experiences and recognize other people’s pain.

Activists purposefully seek out learning, often self-educating or attending school to better understand these social issues. Experiences with racism pair with education because these experiences are educational themselves. Those who did not have negative experiences with the police that they saw as motivating, referenced the racism they witnessed and heard about from others. Activists also talk about racism in other systems, such as the disadvantage children of color have in the education system. Environmental justice as a racial issue was also raised often, because of the increased burden non-elites and people of color face from environmental degradation (United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice 1987). For example, one activist texted me, “historical minority, mostly black, neighborhoods were more likely to be exposed to environmental toxics and industries that produce them were 3x more likely to be located in their area than their white counterparts.”

All of these experiences seem to lead most activists to reach the same conclusion, which one activist summed up,

It’s not like we start off on the same playing field and we’re just trying to navigate through. No, we already have the cards stacked against us...When was the last time you ever heard of a person shooting a cop in uniform...for self defense and he got off? Never. But a cop could fear for their life and kill a civilian. But a civilian can’t shoot a cop and say I feared for my life even though we have videos and testimonies and statements and eyewitness accounts [bangs on the table for emphasis] that it is realistic that a Black person could fear for their life being cornered by a police officer. A Black person could fear for their life, but do you think that would hold up? Absolutely not.

This statement describes the activist’s understanding of the history of policing and racism, her understanding of the existence of systemically and institutionally embedded racism, and her

understanding of the unfair imbalance persisting between police and civilians and between people of different races.

Educating experiences about racism translate into distrust of police. Anabella said, “I don’t believe there’s ever such a thing as a good cop at all.” I think this stems from the idea that police officers are at least complicit if not direct enablers of institutional racism in America. They are seen as buying in to the prevailing stereotypes and prejudices and carrying them out unjustly. She continued, “by the time you’re finished like going through training [to be a police officer] and actually the environment, you end up being racist or having racist tendencies...it does change perspectives because like some of the most racist cops I’ve ever dealt with are Black cops.” Some activists are less damning. Sam, who knows some police officers said, “There’s also some folks like I said that are on our side...they do what they do, that’s how they pay the bills, but they also understand like shit ain’t right.” Crystal told me that we have to work with police to achieve racial justice. No other activist I interviewed shared her view. She also explained, “there’s a systematic problem with the police as an institution. There’s a problem with our criminal justice system as an institution, but yet, so far our experiences [with the police] have been good.”

Motivations to Avoid Activism

Though this section has dealt significantly with personal experiences with racism and education as a motivator for activism, it can have the opposite effect. At a protest in defense of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy in Ybor City, approximately fifteen activists showed up. At least four police officers attended as well, standing on the side as we organized and sometimes driving by us as we marched. Before we began marching, three of the cops approached us and asked if we were marching in the streets. One was

holding a camera, video recording us. Joslyn, a White activist I observed at many activist events, told the police they were not invited and to go away.

After the police approached, Austin, a trans activist of color, left with a couple other activists. I found them an hour later sitting at an outdoor table. Austin was visibly shaking and appeared to be feeling anxious. He told me he decided not to participate in the action because he had three negative experiences with cops that were harmful for him. He did not explain what these experiences were, but said that the police cause him to experience symptoms of PTSD. Austin also explained that police “know his face.” He was upset that what he perceived as intimidation from the police worked – they scared him away from activism.

Austin is not the only example of racism and policing deterring people from activism. Anabella is a Black woman who was an employee for Get Covered America/Enroll America but quit after experiencing racism both from police and civilians. Anabella was a community organizer signing residents up for the Affordable Care Act. During an interview, she told me that while signing people up for healthcare in a public space, a civilian followed her and yelled racial slurs. Police officers came over and blamed her for the commotion, saying that she should not have been there in the first place. She also found that people bypassed her to talk to White activists. She was worried she would lose her job because she was not reaching goals. She explained to her boss, “look people aren’t talking to me. I’m pretty sure it’s because you know like another person slipped and called me the n-word.”

At the time of her interview, Anabella was not actively involved in community organizing. She spoke about how she felt discouraged and unwelcome in her job as a community organizer because of the racism she experienced not only from strangers and police officers, but also from others within the organization. As I will discuss later, when there is intragroup racism

or other forms of discrimination, most often the offender is exiled from the group. Anabella's experience with racism within the organization Get Covered America is typical; there are often people in activism that are ignorant to the intersections and signs of discriminations. However, I have most often seen it dealt with in other ways, so that the activist facing discrimination does not have to leave. It seems that Anabella's coworkers did not stand up for her or make an effort to educate the offenders. Many of the activists I interviewed identify as radical leftists and organize within radical leftist groups. When someone is labeled as "racist," "homophobic," "police informant," etc. they are often dropped from all groups in the radical leftist community, though sometimes a process of restorative justice is attempted. If the offense is clearly because of ignorance, education of the offender is attempted, and they may be able to remain in the group. The activist group Anabella worked in, Get Covered America, is not part of that radical leftist community (though she sometimes attends events held by that community) and thus may not have the same culture that requires absolute adherence to the ideology of intersectionality that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Anabella also stepped back because of the emotional toll, saying, "a lot of social media was showing the police killings and things along that line. It got too much to me and I was like I can't have this every day, so I saw it more of like a self care thing for me to kind of like not fully remove myself, but not be too involved." Cassandra, another Black activist, also spoke about her limitations when it comes to choosing how to be an activist. She felt she was limited because of anxiety, depression, and fear.

There are other reasons that may dissuade someone from activism, for example the potential to be physically threatened by police and civilians, to be doxxed and have private info shared with the intention of inviting harassment. Activists in the Tampa community have

reported each of these potentials. Many activists have been doxxed, having their private information, such as phone numbers and addresses, posted by a group named Save Southern Heritage Florida on the internet after speaking against the Confederate Statue at a public hearing (Marrero 2017). One said that she receives threatening phone calls. A civilian kned one activist in the back during a town hall in Plant City for not standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. Others reported that they were hit multiple times by a White supremacist wielding a pole while protesting Richard Spencer speaking at the University of Florida.

Many activists believe that they can face surveillance from the American government because they participate in activism. They worry that as rabble rousers, they may have the attention of the FBI or police, such as activists during the Civil Rights Movement did, and fear that the police will try to frame them or target them for arrest (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1980). A member of Black Lives Matter Tampa reported that she has suspected potential police informants at meetings, has an FBI file that she has been able to read thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, and has police officers assigned to tail her. I have not been able to confirm if any of this is true, but they are real fears many activists hold. Sometimes activists jokingly “talk to the government” by holding up their phones and asking something like, “did you hear that Agent Johnson?” as if the phones have been bugged.

In conclusion, while some activists may be dissuaded from activism due to anxiety and the desire for self-preservation, many activists find their negative experiences to be motivating. Those who have not faced racism find the experiences of their friends and others in the media to motivate them to right the injustice they believe is occurring. Racism has many implications, such as an unhealthy living environment, but activists often cite their and others’ experiences with the police and the criminal justice system as motivating. They absorb information, opinions,

and news and reach the conclusions that racism is real and harmful to Black people and other people of color. The activists in the Tampa community also conclude that it is possible to combat racism and perhaps feel it is their responsibility to do so. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these motivations are mediated through ideologies.

Anti-Racist Ideology

Gerlach and Hine describe social movements as offering, “a change oriented and action-motivating *ideology* which transcends mere self-interest” (Gerlach and Hine 1970, 387). They explain how “the perception of real or imagined opposition” improves unity of the social movement (Gerlach and Hine 1970, 387). It is in these aspects of social movements that I can describe the anti-racist ideology that includes an anti-capitalist philosophy and an intersectional philosophy. A perceived enemy, capitalism, allows Tampa activists to more easily unite and direct their actions. Anti-capitalism in the Tampa activist community is demonstrated through words and actions, such as anti-corporation boycotts, Karl Marx reading groups, and calls for divestment. These activists see the ideology of anti-capitalism as “transcending” their own self-interest because it believed to have the potential to improve the state of oppression worldwide.

An intersectional philosophy recognizes the legitimacy of all people’s experiences and knowledge (Collins 2012, 444). Intersectionality as used in anthropology, “emphasizes the importance of simultaneously considering how different aspects of social location (e.g., gender, ethnicity, class, age, geography, sexual identity) interlock and the impact of systems and processes of oppression and domination” (Janes and Corbett 2009, 171). The intersections of “social locations” such as nation, gender, and race contribute to experiences and identities within cultural contexts, the meanings of which should not be taken for granted (Brown 2005, 248). Intersectionality also advocates for recognizing the intellect and intellectual contributions people of color make to both academia and activism (McClaurin 2001, 1). Tampa activists use intersectionality in much the same way as anthropologists and feminist scholars because they

acknowledge the differences in experience that people of different backgrounds and levels of privilege will have, as well as how that can and should be continuously informing activism.

Quite often, Activists use the term “intersectional” to also describe inclusivity and diversity. They see an intersectional community as one that treats people as individuals who have different needs. By emphasizing lived experience, diversity in leadership, and the need for inclusion, Tampa activists cultivate a community and culture of equity, consciously attempting to model the ideal they work to achieve. Intersectionality complements anti-capitalism. Both philosophies seek to uplift those at the bottom through systemic change. Activists embed these ideologies in their community in order to create “safe spaces” for people of diverse experiences and to better understand how to erode the whole system of oppression.

During interviews, I was able to understand the ideologies that activists use to guide them largely by asking these questions: What is racial justice? What would achieving racial justice look like? What institutions need to change in order to achieve racial justice? Observing how anti-capitalism and intersectionality are practiced is even more telling of the kind of community activists work to create. Wedded together, these two ideologies create a cohesive and cogent framework for resisting racism.

“Capitalism Sucks”: Anti-Capitalist Ideology

“All Work Under Capitalism is Exploitative and Non-Consensual!”

Sign at the International Sex Worker’s Rights Day Rally and Dance Party

Some activist organizations explicitly work against capitalism and most clearly demonstrate the use of Marxist perspectives in activism, though I argue that anti-capitalism pervades the racial justice activist community as a whole. In *Marxism and Social Movements*, various authors discuss the presence of a Marx-influenced philosophy within activism, of which I

have found ample evidence of at my fieldsite (Baker et al. 2014).

Karl Marx wrote of class struggle and revolution of the working class, issues that are highly salient to the activists I interact with in Tampa (Marx 1978a; Marx 1978b). Marx described a system of exploitation whereby workers toil for a capitalist, creating surplus labor through working more hours than the value of their labor that they are compensated for (Marx 1978a; Marx 1978b). Thus, the capitalist and the capitalist system as a whole exploit the worker and trap her in a system that she has little power to control (Marx 1978a; Marx 1978b). One Marxist scholar described a distinction between Marxist and Marxian thought, which is relevant to this discussion. Paul Thomas in “Critical Reception: Marx Then and Now” wrote that a Marxian belief is, “one that can safely be attributed to Marx himself” while a Marxist belief “may also be a Marxian one, but not necessarily” (Thomas 1991). This means that a Marxist belief is an interpretation of Marx’s work that may deviate or expand on his work (Thomas 1991).

I believe these activists follow a Marxist rather than Marxian interpretation when discussing and working against capitalism (Thomas 1991). I claim this largely because their struggles for power reach outside the boundaries of class, as compared to Marx’s original work that dealt with class only (Thomas 1991). Though it can be argued that all marginalized people represent a lower class of sorts, I do not believe that the activists conceptualize it that way. Rather, it seems that they see marginalized people as multiple groups, some of whom are marginalized on basis of class, but most of whom are marginalized on basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, undocumented status, sexuality, religion, and/or gender. In this way, anti-capitalism ties in with the intersectional ideology discussed later in this chapter. For example, Caitlyn Jenner is a wealthy, famous transgender woman. She is not marginalized because of her class –

rather, she is benefiting from capitalism. However, Caitlyn Jenner experiences discrimination because of her status as a transgender woman. The activists in the community recognize this as a distinction. Thus, Tampa racial justice activists see class as only one measure of exploitation and powerlessness, yet apply a Marxist perspective to all people who lack power.

Marxism predicts an egalitarian economic system free of exploitation that would dissolve private property and be achieved by the uprising of the lower class (Fine and Saad-Filho 2016; Marx and Engels 1978a). From my observations, many activists believe that once capitalism falls, all of the discrimination and marginalization that capitalism bolsters, including racism, will also fall. In the Marxist spirit of promoting enlightenment as a strategy of racial justice activism, activists educate and recruit others to their causes. They do so both through personal interactions, through their actions (such as chanting during protests), and through social media.

Anti-Capitalist Ideology in Practice

Mutual Aid Disaster Relief is a chapter-based grassroots organization in Tampa, Florida that I first came into contact with a few days before Hurricane Irma made landfall in Florida in September of 2017. Olivia from Black Lives Matter asked me to attend an emergency weather-planning meeting organized by Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, saying that they may need my help. I attended the meeting with participants from organizations including Democratic Socialists of America, Food Not Bombs, Black Lives Matter, University of South Florida Graduate Assistants United, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, Love Has No Borders, Restorative Justice Coalition, and Industrial Workers of the World.

At the meeting, which was held at an acupuncture clinic in the gentrifying neighborhood of Seminole Heights, approximately thirty people, most of whom were White, sat on the floor of a small, poorly lit room. The activists talked about the potential impact of Hurricane Irma as well

as ways to mitigate loss of life and disruption of lives. The meeting lasted until after 10pm. By this time, activists had determined that they would set up a system to drive refugees to stock up on necessities, to transport undocumented people and people with warrants (referred to as “vulnerable populations”) to a mosque (a non-governmental shelter), to coordinate a daisy chain to bring supplies into the area, to collect boats, to deploy volunteers with medical training as “street medics” (again, non-governmental), and to open dialogues with “houseless” people to find out how they could be helped.

The Tampa chapter of Mutual Aid Disaster Relief seeks to improve people’s lives by eschewing capitalism and offering free relief aid. The chapter engages in racial justice activism away from governmental and corporate influence. Their activism often takes the form of economic and medical aid to mostly people of color, rather than other organizations that are often political advocacy focused.

On their website, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief describes their organization as, “a grassroots disaster relief network based on the principles of solidarity, mutual aid, and autonomous direct action” (Mutual Aid Disaster Relief 2017). The administrator wrote that Mutual Aid Disaster Relief is a, “decentralized network...drawn together by our collective commitment to stand in solidarity with those impacted by disasters...We build our network through education and action. We are deeply moved by the Black Panther survival programs which served the aim of satisfying immediate needs while simultaneously raising people’s consciousness.” Mutual Aid Disaster Relief operates on a system external to paid nonprofits, government, and corporations to improve the lives of others through “collective” action. Ideas about collective action are in contrast to the individualistic nature of capitalism.

Activists in Mutual Aid Disaster Relief in Tampa promote an economic and social system outside of capitalism. In the aftermath of Irma, these activists collaborated with a few of the other groups represented in the weather-planning meeting to create the Facebook page “Decentralized Response” (initially called “Irma Decentralized Response”) and the physical Tampa Hub. The “Decentralized Response” page continues to operate into 2018. It is a posting board for people offering and asking for help. For example, posters may urge people to bring vegan food to a food share in Lykes Park for the homeless or they may call for “trauma counselors” to voluntarily stand by to counsel Mutual Aid Disaster Relief volunteers and members of the public who have experienced “traumatic disaster-related events.”

The “Decentralized Response” Facebook page is also a place to discuss and call for help for two other projects – the aid trips to Puerto Rico and the Tampa Hub, a physical building that offers free food, toiletries, household supplies, minimal medical care, and acupuncture to anyone who needs it. At the Hub, volunteers operate under the philosophy that people in need know what they need and can take whatever they choose. There is no limit to taking resources, no requirement to prove need, and no forms to fill out. A sign on the wall proclaims, “solidarity not charity.”

Mutual Aid Disaster Relief activists visited Puerto Rico numerous times to “liberate” supplies to rural Puerto Rican areas and to undertake in investigative journalism in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. On the first trip, seven people, members of organizations including Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, Democratic Socialists of America, Black Lives Matter, and Food Not Bombs traveled to Puerto Rico to remove relief supplies (with permission) from the FEMA warehouse and deliver them to people in need. I was told they were “liberating” the supplies from the clutches of the intentionally negligent government bent on harming people of color and

impoverished people. They traveled through areas that FEMA workers told them were impassible to needy communities. There, they gave people free medical attention and distributed supplies.

This trip exemplifies the work of Mutual Aid Disaster Relief to work outside the existing harmful system. Typically, the activists in Mutual Aid Disaster Relief characterize corporations and the American government as agents of capitalism, perennially stepping on the rights and livelihoods of the working class, people of color, and other marginalized groups. By “liberating” supplies, reaching supposedly impenetrable communities, equitably offering completely free medical care, and doing so outside of the influence of capitalism, these activists resist capitalism and the status quo, offering a example of the sort of society that is possible. The practices of self-determination and the lack of bureaucracy at the Tampa Hub, the Puerto Rico aid trips, and the “Decentralized Response” Facebook page exemplify this ideology in practice.

The Democratic Socialist of America also engage in anti-capitalistic racial justice activism. This group was established in Tampa in 2017. At one body meeting I attended in November of 2017, the co-chair of the organization, Carla, told the group that the Democratic Socialists of America would be interested in aligning and collaborating with any groups and projects that uplift the working class. She explained that the Democratic Socialists of America is not a political party, but a group to advance democratic socialism. On their Facebook page, the administrator wrote, “We are socialists because we reject an international economic order sustained by private profit, alienated labor, race and gender discrimination, environmental destruction, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo” (Democratic Socialists of America 2017). It is clear that the Democratic Socialists of America are interested in systemic change that improves the conditions and status of the most marginalized people.

One afternoon, I attended a self-defense training for “women and femmes” that women-identifying members of the Democratic Socialists of America organized. Before the class started, we stood around the padded room talking in workout clothes. One group talked about capitalism and activism and I overheard the words “capitalism sucks.” Trissa, who has a paying job in the ACLU, talked about how she wished she could work outside of the capitalistic system. Her ideal would be to survive as an activist without needing to work for money. She told us of her plans to quit in a few years so she could go back to “grassroots” work. The implication was that she would be freer, though perhaps poorly resourced, to work on projects with tactics she approved of. To be paid to be an activist is a rare thing in the Tampa activist community. Most activists work in other fields, such as information technology, finance, and recruiting.

One event is particularly indicative of the shared goals of anti-capitalism and racial justice. Officers from the Plant City Police Department shot and killed a man named Jesus Cervantes who had called the police for help in July of 2017 (Figueroa 2017). The Restorative Justice Coalition called for speakers to attend a public meeting in Plant City to lobby the Plant City Council to improve policing practices and end racially biased policing. We planned to speak during the open comment time, but when Mayor Lott, the Mayor of Plant City, decreased speaking time from the usual three minutes to 60 seconds, supposedly in the interest of time, Meg, a member of Restorative Justice Coalition decided we would purposefully get kicked out of the meeting.

This action was intended as a form of resistance to the council members suppressing speaking time for no apparent reason, as the agenda was much shorter than it had been in the past. Meg asked one “comrade” to disrupt the meeting. Toward the end of the meeting, this activist, Joslyn, shouted, “if you put a tenth of the amount of time into people’s welfare as your

corporate welfare and profit margins, this city would be a safer place!” (Figueroa 2017). We were of course immediately escorted out of the building. Once outside we commenced protesting as people exited the building. Most of the City Council members used a back door to avoid the protesters.

Approximately fifteen activists attended, most who were from the Democratic Socialists of America, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, and/or identified as antifa (which is not an organization). Meg, who is in both Mutual Aid Disaster Relief and of the Democratic Socialists of America, reached out to her social networks to recruit activists to protect members of the Restorative Justice Coalition while speaking at the regularly scheduled Plant City Council meeting. These protectors attended in order to keep an eye on us physically and on our cars, as the fear was that white supremacists or even police officers might wish harm.

A few days previously, Gary Snow had threatened a member of the Restorative Justice Coalition, Damon, on Facebook, saying, “[Damon] we’ll see [if I’m above the law] at the next plant city council meeting.” This man was described to me as a White supremacist and provocateur. After he threatened Damon, Meg wrote in a private thread on Facebook saying that Gary Snow had tried to hurt her at the rally against Richard Spencer speaking at University of Florida. Other activists reported to me that he was carrying a flag and hitting people with the flagpole at the event. While I have never witnessed or participated in any violence during protests, it appears that the threat is considered real and that some activists believe using violence against White supremacists is a fair tactic. Though Gary Snow did not follow through on his threat, more than ten activists, largely from the anti-capitalist groups and ideologies mentioned above came to protect us as we advocated for people of color in Plant City.

Once we were escorted out and began chanting outside of the building, members of the public trickled out of the meeting. One old, White man came out and told us, in what was apparently a reprimand, that he spent twenty years of his life to give us our right to protest. The implication was that he did not approve of our use of that right. One activist heckled this man about how fighting in the military did not defend our right to protest. There was a little bit of back and forth. The activist then asked if this man knew what corporations he bolstered by fighting in the American army against Koreans and how Korea had anything to do with us protesting.

This vignette is one of many instances in which activists' opinions about capitalism play a part in tactics, organization, and acts of resistance. Both the words of disruption and the heckling of the veteran were anti-capitalist sentiments. Many other instances and conversations have shown how activists incorporate an anti-capitalist ideology into their activism. For example, activists have warned me about aligning myself with charities, nonprofits, the government, or businesses because they will determine what I am able to do and are self-interested. One Black Lives Matter protester said, that paid organizing, "isn't going to mean shit." She told me that nonprofits have ties to organizations. Another said, "I'd say that grassroots organizations are amazing because they don't have this type of corporate or silo-ed interest that makes them focus on one area that they're getting paid a grant for or they're given a grant for, so I think we truly at our core, represent the interests of the people." Local grassroots organizations do appear to reflect local concerns. The "Report to the Tampa Citizens Review Board," which surveyed 601 people in Tampa, reported that the most important issues that survey respondents identified are the same police reforms that local grassroots organizations have been lobbying for (Heydari and Le Grand 2018, 24-25). These were "community policing," "body cameras," "use of force,"

“individuals with mental illness,” and “bias training,” which are specific reform points that organizations such as the Restorative Justice Coalition have been lobbying for (Heydari and Le Grand 2018). However, I cannot speak to whether local organizations that are not grassroots do a better or worse job of addressing local concerns.

One organization in the activist community, Organize Florida, identifies as a grassroots organization, though they have paid employees and membership requires a ten-dollar fee each month *or* active participation for people who cannot afford that. Other activists I spoke to told me that Organize Florida is not actually grassroots, though the Tampa Bay director for Organize Florida told me that it is. Therefore, it appears that organizations (whether they be activist, business, or government) that work with money may be considered less credible than those that are purely “grassroots,” though activists will often align with this organization to work toward common goals.

Through their actions and words, “radical” Tampa activists display their use of an anti-capitalistic perspective. “People over profit,” a chant regularly heard at protests and marches, succinctly communicates racial justice activists’ anti-capitalist opinions. They argue that the powerful take advantage of the marginalized to gain profit and power. Once that system topples, it is believed that so too will oppression. Thus, it appears that Tampa activists are drawn to anti-capitalism because freedom is equated with the downfall of capitalism. Olivia regularly exemplifies anti-capitalism through her words and actions. One afternoon, Olivia posted photos of boxes of food in her car. Figures could be seen placing the food in Walmart shopping carts. Olivia wrote, “If you lookin for me, I’m in the parking lot of Dollar Tree...subverting capitalism. Get @ me.” Evidently, she was handing out free food to anyone who wanted it in the parking lot of major corporations that sell food to only those who can afford it. In this small act of resistance

and larger, collective acts of resistance, activists in Tampa work to dismantle capitalism and the systems of oppression that feed into and feed off of capitalism.

Practicing Intersectionality in the Activist Community

“What is your privilege and how have you used it to help someone today?”

Jada

Intersectionality as a framework emerged with Black feminists in the 1960s and 70s (Collins 2012, 449). Its purpose continues to be to question and understand inequality through a consideration of politics, elitism, and power (Collins 2012, 449; McClaurin 2001, 2). In the 1995 “A Black Feminist Statement,” Black women, “argued that race-only or gender-only frameworks advanced partial and incomplete analyses of the social injustices that characterize African American women’s lives and that race, gender, social class, and sexuality all shape black women’s experiences” (Collins 2012, 449). In racial justice activism in Tampa, this perspective is used to understand the experiences and guide the advocacy of all people with any marginalized status. In doing so, activists learn from each other about inequality that people experience and can effectively advocate for the varying needs and interests of others. By understanding how sexism interacts with racism to affect the experiences of individual Black women, for example, activists avoid viewing all Black people as a monolith. Intersectionality plays out in various practices of the Tampa activist community as racial justice activists integrate advocacy on basis of race with that of other identities. In this community, intersectionality often means exploring diverse identities through listening, acceptance, and treating diversity as highly valued.

Early in the research process, I posted on a Facebook group called Indivisible Action Tampa Bay a call for racial justice activists to volunteer to be interviewed. I received a handful of responses and messages from interested people. Interestingly, these people were all White,

none of whom I had ever seen at activist events and none of whom I chose to interview. One person who appeared to be a Black drag queen tagged an activist who I had seen at activist events in my post. This activist, Austin, identifies as a trans man of color and chastised me in the comments section, “I hope you're planning on talkin to some non-white folx too. Js [just saying]. Since it's about *racial* justice” (Indivisible Action Tampa Bay Facebook Page 2017). When I assured him that I was, he said, “There are several racial justice orgs around the area led by black and brown folk. Have you gone to any meetings or actions and like, met some black and brown activists?” (Indivisible Action Tampa Bay Facebook Page 2017). I was never able to interview this activist, though I asked.

The next day, I ran into Austin at a protest in support of DACA. After walking the streets of Ybor with a small group of protesters chanting, “when Dreamers are under attack, what do we do? Stand up fight back,” I found him sitting at an outdoor table with Rachel, a White woman I had never met before; Olivia, the Black woman who had helped me get my research started; and a biracial woman from Restorative Justice Coalition, Josephine. I sat, mostly silent unless spoken directly to, and listened to the conversation for almost four hours. They discussed a lot of issues and often expressed vitriol about White people. Rachel found this discomforting, which I could tell from her expression and continued questioning glances at me, the only other White person. A disagreement between her, Olivia, and Austin ensued that largely centered on White people’s role in racism. Austin said he was tired of talking to and educating White people who always try to come in and fix problems they ultimately fail to fix. He truly believed that White people did not, and perhaps could not, understand the experiences of people of color, lamenting that he even has to teach his mom, who is White, about racism.

The activist intersectional ideology teaches that individuals are the knowledgeable and

authoritative narrators of their own stories and agents of their own advocacy. Austin's anger toward what he saw as controlling, ignorant White people in activism is indicative of this aspect of intersectionality. Though it may seem contradictory, I was welcomed into this discussion, asked my opinion, and treated with kindness. This experience during fieldwork underscores both the complex role of White people in racial justice and the importance activists ascribe to prioritizing lived experience of *marginalized people* in the movement. They also clearly see people as individuals in a group, suggesting that while they view race and other identities as indicative of experience and privilege, they may not fall into the trap of essentializing. This is seen in the way that Austin welcomed me into the community as an individual, but was wary of me as an unknown White person on the internet. However, I believe that if I had violated the values of intersectionality in carrying out this research project by studying White activists involvement in racial justice, for example, I would have faced pushback and appeared as a potentially ignorant enemy of the movement. One man spoke from his perspective as a White ally saying,

Racial justice is obviously a very complex term, but it involves an intersectional thought process of getting a mode of equity and accountability towards people of color, people of a variety of ethnicities. It involves allowing members of these oppressed groups to take charge, to work on ending their marginalization with your effort and support, so racial justice is a lot of listening, a lot of doing work that is uncomfortable to you, a lot of learning and unlearning, and again just a lot of support.

Thus, activists prioritize the voices of people of all marginalized identities believing it is not only the best way to achieve racial justice, but also the most respectful way to advocate for causes that one is not directly affected by (i.e. that one is an ally for).

It would be impossible to identify certain organizations that exemplify intersectionality because it is so tightly woven into each act of resistance and integral to the activist identity and thought process. Racial justice activists promote intersectional practices and lobby for intersectional laws, such as advocating to end race-based police brutality through cultural competency training. However, the best way to understand the ideology of intersectionality is to view how it is practiced within the activist community. The way Tampa activists purposefully embed intersectionality should be viewed as an example of what they work to cultivate in the wider world.

Space, Voice, and Identity

As in anthropology, activists recognize structural violence as connected to discrimination, such as racism, and thus a lack of an intersectional perspective. Integral to this interpretation is their understanding of race as a “social construct,” a term activists often use. One activist said, “race is definitely something that human beings have done to categorize ourselves.” She continued, “I’m not justifying race issues, but it’s been something throughout human history that is not new.” This statement shows that she recognizes race is important because humans have decided to give it meaning.

Activists use the terms “space” and “voice”/“silencing” as important concepts of intersectionality. When I asked one activist to define space, she said,

You understand how civilizations are created for the people in them? Usually that’s the privileged people who are able to make those decisions. If you’re not a member of those privileged few, most likely you’ve been overlooked in the creation of your civilization... When I say space what I mean is that’s something we have to create

because space was not cut out for us in the construction of our society, in our infrastructure, in our institutions.

Space often refers to the capacity of communities to enable everyone to equally use their own agency for their needs. In the Tampa activist community, this often manifests as giving space for people to use their “voice.”

Voice refers to elevating words of certain people and giving space to the marginalized to be heard and respected. Cassandra said, “The consciousness of privilege even within the activist spaces is important because there are White voices that are more elevated than the voices that they’re supposed to be advocating for.” She talked about the need to seek leadership from Black people in racial justice activism and the need to give them the ability to speak by, for example, directing a reporter to a Black person instead of a White person.

This is related to the idea of silencing, which is seen as a characteristic of the American government. Silencing refers to the practice of institutions/people failing to make space for marginalized people to advocate for themselves. During participant observation with activists, the idea that those of marginalized identities are uniquely qualified to solve problems they and others like them face is a major theme. For example, these activists often discussed the need to diversify policymakers, stepping away from the typical pattern of electing, appointing, and hiring straight, cisgender, White men. They view diversification of political leaders as a way to create space for marginalized people to use their voice and advocate for people of their identity.

Organizations may practice “step up, step back” rules in meetings which call on speakers to self-reflect when they need to “step back” and give space for someone else speak. At meetings and protests, people consciously limit their own speaking time in order to amplify the voices of people that are seen as marginalized and relevant to the issue at hand. For example, the voices of

people who experience racial profiling at the airport because of racial, ethnic, or national identity were uplifted during protests against the various iterations of the travel ban on people from Muslim majority states released by the Trump administration.

The space facet in the intersectional ideology promotes accessibility, meaning the ease to which everyone can participate in an event. This is again related to inclusivity and awareness of diversity in identity. Some people may not be able to attend events because they lack transportation, have a mental health disorder, or have a physical disability. One Black, queer activist described her first press conference to promote her candidacy, realizing too late that she did not have a sign language interpreter. She promised herself that she would not do another press conference or speech if there were no interpreter present. She said, “Let me tell you, me I’m able-bodied. I have a job. I have a car. Am I still struggling? Absolutely, but I have privilege.” Her identity as an able-bodied person means that she has to intentionally use that privilege to make events, such as press conferences, accessible to those who may be deaf.

Intersectionality can cause activists to feel guilt because of their own privilege. One activist referred to this when she discussed her status as upper middle class, saying,

My mom was a doctor. My dad worked in engineering before. I was born and then my parents owned a practice together, so I grew up in a space that was similar to that of an upper middle class White child, because I was an upper middle class Black child. So I did not grow up with a fear of the police. I grew up feeling like police were your friends because that’s what I was taught and that’s what the ideology was within my community.

I didn’t start changing that and those ideas until high school, college...

This activist recognizes how her experience growing up played a part in her thinking and positive experiences. She told me she felt a “little shameful” that her privilege of living in an

upper middle class neighborhood meant that she was afforded some protection from the police. Though she works directly on police reform she continued, “sometimes I don’t even feel like my experience is really relevant.”

Confronting Inequality within the Community

Because calls for intersectionality are directed both outward (typically to government agencies such as police departments) and inward, activists also work to consciously unlearn their own biases. For instance activists may take implicit biases quizzes to find out to what degree they unconsciously value male scientists more than women scientists. While addressing institutions directly through calls for policy changes and lobbying, activists are also working to change practices within their organizations.

A small group of members of the Democratic Socialists of America recently organized a Sex Worker Solidarity Network intended to help sex workers communicate and advocate. The founder, an interviewee who has worked as an escort, told me that sex work is wrongly criminalized and discriminated against. Sex workers lead the Sex Worker Solidarity Network, so that they can claim autonomy over their own labor, a value aligned with intersectionality. This group has participated in advocating for sex workers through the condemnation of a bill that would give police greater latitude to search bathhouses and forces these businesses to adhere to strict standards, for example.

A Black woman, another interviewee who used to work in a strip club, told the founder of this organization that she thinks that the Sex Worker Solidarity Network will largely appeal to White sex workers only and would not be welcoming to people of color. During the initial organizing, this activist felt she was proved right when other members of the group failed to grasp how experiences of Black sex workers differ from experiences of White sex workers. An

argument through a messaging app ensued between the scant Black activists in the group and a couple of White activists. This failure is seen as an act of silencing marginalized voices. Since then, the group has taken steps to be more inclusive by giving “space” for the “voices” of people of color and by educating other members about , thus integrating the intersectional perspective into the practices of the organization.

Critique

The activist community rebukes critique, but like all communities and ideologies, this one is not perfect. The positive aspects of the Tampa activist community and their successes notwithstanding, it is important to engage in critical analysis. The ideologies that activists follow can be considered dogmas. Gerlach and Hine “suggest that the certain rigidity of belief structure is essential to motivate and support a radical attitudinal or behavioral change,” a statement which my observations and discussions seem to support (Gerlach and Hine 1970b, 160). As dogmas become incorporated in individuals’ cognition, “There is a sense of finality—of having got a firm hold on a belief system or a conceptual framework that fully satisfies the human need for explanation and meaning” (Gerlach and Hine 1970b, 161). Therefore, I can presume that in finding this absolute or almost absolute truth, Tampa activists can predictably decide a course of action or interpret an experience. The engrained nature of anti-capitalism and intersectionality ideologies coupled with the dogmatic way that they are upheld and practiced may cause activists to lack the flexibility to appreciate other worldviews. An anti-capitalist ideology contributes to a reluctance to ally with groups who can offer support in the form of fundraising or who are “grasstops” (the opposite of grassroots). The anti-capitalist ideology can also sow suspicion with people or groups who are seen as benefitting from capitalism. This may be a missed opportunity and can undermine potential cohesion in the community.

In the Tampa activist community, intersectionality means that people are considered experts on social justice issues according to their identity. This often has a positive result, whereby other activists can follow the lead of the “expert” and ensure that the expert’s needs and the needs of people who identify similarly can be met. This aspect of intersectionality also allows people who may be marginalized in other aspects of their lives to have real power over how their community advocates for them. At other times, this can lead to poor communication and stagnation of progress because these experts are seen as the only legitimate activists on their issue. As a result, activists are obligated to defer to the experts that intersectionality identifies, treating them as gatekeepers of knowledge and the ultimate leaders, without critically analyzing what the experts call upon the activists to do or say.

For example, an activist in the Restorative Justice Coalition, Meg, posted a status on Facebook about Israeli laws that strip residency from Palestinians living in Jerusalem and expel African refugees from Israel. The last sentence said, “We must oppose these racist laws that will cause grave harm and potentially death to those who will be kicked out of Israel.” A woman commented, “I wouldn’t equate or draw comparison to those two laws [Meg]” and “I would change the last sentence.” Deferring to this expert without question, Meg changed the last sentence to, “We must do everything in our power to oppose this genocidal regime.” I commented and asked why the original sentence was problematic. The woman said, “Maybe another time.” Meg commented, “[She] pointed out that we were making a strong comparison between two different laws,” so the woman commented again, “I ask y’all to just leave it please. It’s complicated and I know the intention is good but I don’t think we’re there yet. I promise to come back when I have the energy. If I forget please remind me.” As far as I am aware, she has not yet explained her reasoning.

This example is illustrative of exchanges in the activist community that occur both on and offline. While it is certainly important to listen and defer to the people who are most impacted by a certain issue, sometimes it can hamper discussion and understanding of how best to advocate. Following the expert on an issue solely because of her/his identity discourages critical analysis and harm the community. Other activists recognize this shortcoming of the intersectional ideology. One wrote on social media, “For 2018 can we stop making the SINGULAR criteria for leadership in the work/movement being Black, Femme, Queer, or Trans?” She continued, “A lot of toxic people been out here disrupting spaces just cause they know people are scared to clock them.” This can also promote the essentializing of people of various identities, such as leading people to assume that trans women have homogenous experiences or Muslim people have faced the same experiences with oppression (Harris 1995, 255).

Moreover, the ideology of intersectionality can cause negatives feelings in activists because of their identity, such as the feelings of guilt an activist who was raised affluently expressed during an interview. This ideology promotes what is jokingly referred to as “oppression Olympics” whereby activists feel they have to one-up other activists with the amount of oppression they have faced due to a marginalized status. For example, activists who only face discrimination because of their sexuality are more likely to find that their work or presence is less welcome. Even Black activists who work with many White people on racial justice may be socially shamed for working with too many people who do not experience racism.

At the same time, this intersectional ideology reverses the balance of power typically seen in American culture. People who are oppressed and marginalized in wider society are able to use the intersectional identity to exert their agency and resist the status quo. Thus, I would argue that engaging in intersectionality is an act of resistance in itself.

In conclusion, these anti-racist ideologies of anti-capitalism and intersectionality play a large part in the sort of organizations that racial justice activists create and join, the changes and values they advocate for, and the ways they structure their community. Activists promote the ideology of anti-capitalism, which blames many of the problems of poverty and discrimination on that economic system. Tampa racial justice activists see capitalism as benefiting the rich and exploiting the poor, a structure that keeps the power in the hands of the privileged, wealthy, White ruling class and away from people in poverty and people of color. The ideology of intersectionality promotes diversity in the Tampa racial justice activist community, following leaders of color, and prioritization of the lived experiences of marginalized people. Activists advance these ideologies in order to end racism and shift power to marginalized people.

Acts of Resistance

Throughout American history there exists legacies of racially motivated state-sanctioned killings of Black people and concurrent movements against police brutality and racism in the criminal justice system (Williams 2015b). According to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, author of *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, the current racial justice movement that exists nationally started with the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and expanded to, “a national movement against police brutality and daily police killings of unarmed African Americans” (Taylor 2016, 2). This is related to how other authors have considered “hashtag activism,” online activism that can create a feeling of political togetherness with other activists across distances (Bonilla & Rosa 2015, 4). Bonilla and Rosa connect the activism surrounding the death of Brown in Ferguson with “hashtag activism,” suggesting that the internet enhanced the movement for racial justice both locally and nationally (Bonilla & Rosa 2015, 4).

My interviewees in Tampa have confirmed Taylor’s observation, noting an increase in activity and activists during the presidential campaigns and election of 2016 and a particular focus on police brutality and other race-based instances of harm by the criminal justice system and the state. Taylor describes the discrimination people of color experience from the criminal justice system as a product of institutional racism, which she defines as, “the policies, programs, and practices of public and private institutions that result in greater rates of poverty, dispossession, criminalization, illness, and ultimately mortality of African Americans” (Taylor 2016, 8). As explained in the previous chapter, activists see racism as tied up in unfair systems

that most believe need to be dismantled and reformed. They often use the terms systemic racism or institutional racism to describe this.

Rodriguez describes the tradition and long history of Black women's activism in Tampa through her oral history project (Rodriguez 1998, 96). She writes, "important themes within the activist stories include a sense of connectedness to the African American community, self-regeneration and self-definition by the activists, and indications of community change because of activism" (Rodriguez 1998, 107). Rodriguez found that Black women activists identities were tied up in their values and the ways in which they resisted, such as by running for office, holding positions in organizations like the NAACP, voting, organizing block clubs in their neighborhoods, working for campaigns, boycotting businesses, and creating educational media (Rodriguez 1998, 105-107). Through these actions in the community, the activists were able to successfully influence change (Rodriguez 1998, 106). This chapter will show that the activists in this project, which was conducted twenty years after Rodriguez's in the same city, also influence positive community change through their acts of resistance that are tied up in their identities.

Covert Activism

Infrapolitics, according to James Scott, are clandestine "everyday forms of resistance," (Scott 1990, 190) rather than overt actions easily classified as activism, such as protesting in the streets or signing a petition. This manifestation of activism is hidden resistance to the status quo and to the widespread values that promote conformity. Like overt activism, covert acts of resistance confront conformity. Scott writes this type of activism is beyond visible, having been made purposefully invisible (Scott 1990, 183). Infrapolitics is used by "subordinate groups who have ample reason to fear venturing their unguarded opinion" and provides the "cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally

been focused” (Scott 1990, 184). His discussion suggests that acts of activism can be separated into two categories that work together to make the movement successful – covert and overt acts of resistance.

When people cannot overtly resist the status quo because of their own lack of power or because covert resistance would end unsuccessfully, they may turn to covert acts (Scott 1990, 184-185). For example, enslaved people historically resisted by stealing from those they were forced to labor for, feigning ignorance, sabotaging, running away, and working slowly (Scott 1990, 188). Scott writes, “the aggregation of thousands upon thousands of such ‘petty’ acts of resistance have dramatic economic and political effects” (Scott 1990, 192).

Michel de Certeau’s discussion of tactic and strategy is relevant to this discussion (de Certeau 2011). According to de Certeau, tactics and strategies are distinguished based on the power that the users wield (de Certeau 2011). De Certeau wrote, “a tactic is an art of the weak” and involves deception, while a strategy is inherently visible because of the power strategists hold (de Certeau 2011). Activists are not powerless, but do not hold the same level of power as those who benefit and promote the system activists are trying to subvert. Activists are not as powerful as CEOs of major corporations or the Koch brothers. On the other hand, activists’ ability to organize collectively under an accepted ideology does not leave them without power. However, the imbalance of power must lead to the conclusion that Tampa activists are users of tactics rather than strategies.

As Yelvington wrote in *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace*, for the workers in the exploitative EUL Trinidadian factory, “power becomes determined by the levels and kinds of capital that individuals possess” (Yelvington 1995, 240). This leads me to believe that I am correct in determining that activists use tactics and not

strategies because of the power they hold, or rather because of the power they cannot hold.

According to Yelvington, those without power are forced into using tactics rather than strategies to resist, because strategic resistance is made impossible (Yelvington 1995, 240).

He also wrote that tactics, though marginally improving the workers' conditions, "serve to reinforce and legitimize their subordination on another level" (Yelvington 1995, 240). In this, Scott and Yelvington disagree. Yelvington argues that engaging in work slowdowns, for example, reinforces the subordination of the workers because they appear to be fulfilling the stereotypes that the elite have about people of their ethnicity (Yelvington 1995, 240). On the other hand, Scott writes that this action is a strategic decision and a tactic "designed to minimize appropriation" (Scott 1990, 188). "Virtually every instance of personal domination is intimately connected with a process of appropriation" or in other words, material exploitation (Scott 1990, 188). By disrupting the flow of work, workers decrease productivity and take earnings away from the elites. That is not an outcome to dismiss as ineffective. Personal boycotts are a similar form of economic covert resistance that activists use as a tactic of resistance. For example, I know of multiple activists boycotting institutions such as Walmart and the Florida State Fair.

Covert activism, or actions that may not be perceived as acts of resistance, can take many forms. Even the act of surviving in difficult circumstances can be considered a form of resistance (Collins 2014, 201). I identify experimenting with different identities or lifestyle choices, such as polyamory, as a covert act of resistance. One activist posted on her Facebook page that she was interested in trying out polyamory and gender-neutral pronouns. I do not believe she decided to use gender-neutral pronouns, but she is currently in a polyamorous relationship with a married man and identifies as pansexual. Previously she was also in a relationship with her boyfriend's wife, but they decided to break up. Gina is one of many activists who is polyamorous. The

culture of the Tampa activist community offers opportunities for self-exploration in a highly accepting environment. Even this acceptance of identities and lifestyle choices that are not mainstream is a type of resistance to the status quo.

Participants in a study of Boston anarchists reported choosing non-monogamy to exert a sense of control and to resist gender oppression (Bradley 2011, 11-12). Non-monogamous relationships may act as embodiment of radicalism (Bradley 2011). Bradley writes that these relationships are expressions of individual agency that “question the legitimacy of patriarchal, heterosexist, and sexist ideologies and offer an alternative to the oppression they see as inherent in heteronormative relationships” (Bradley 2011, 1). She describes non-monogamy as an “embodied performance” of questioning the institution of marriage (Bradley 2011, 26). Thus, I characterize polyamorous relationships in the activist community as an act of resistance because they defy typical American values and norms, much in the same way activists question the status quo through protests or lobbying.

From my observations, LGBTQ+ identities in the Tampa activist community range from queer, pansexual, gay, bisexual, trans, gender non-binary, and lesbian. Bradley writes that, “queerness in itself becomes a strategy for resisting mainstream narratives of acceptable forms of identity” (Bradley 2011, 2). Of the eleven people that I interviewed, eight identified as LGBTQ+. Pansexual/panromantic was the most common, with four people I interviewed identifying as such. All of these identities are accepted and the diversity of identities is even expected in the Tampa activist community.

One activist, who uses they, them, and their as their gender pronouns, reported that they are marrying a refugee who is living in Calais, France so that the refugee can come to the United States and escape the violent living conditions in Calais. They know that this is illegal, but

believe it is the right thing to do. In this way, an activist is attempting to secretly subvert laws in order to take actions they deem appropriate. Another subverted the social norms to advocate for herself while being discriminated against in her job. She characterized this as passive resistance and a “form of silent protest.” While working to sign people up for healthcare, Anabella experienced issues with civilians avoiding her because of her race. She felt her bosses were not hearing her, instead telling her to grow a thick skin. Anabella knew it was an unspoken rule that she was not supposed to mention to another group about her organization’s problems. In telling another group, Anabella ensured that it would “get back” to her superiors. She found this to be a successful tactic.

Some activists choose to stay off the “front lines” of the movement because of intimidation, fear, or mental health illnesses. Cassandra is one such activist. She told me during an interview, “I think a part of me used to beat myself up for not being sure if I could participate in that way.” Tangerine Jones, an activist Cassandra encountered online, inspired her to be creative with her activism instead. Tangerine Jones “rage bakes when a lot of tragic stuff starts to happen in the world. She’ll like bake a bunch of goodies and she’ll allow people to come to her home for free and they eat all of her tasty goods and just share and they can cry and laugh and just get it all off their chest.” Cassandra sees herself participating in activism in this way because, “there has to be a place of safety and warmth and love to come back to.” Creating a Tarot deck by and for Black women and engaging in spiritual healing, Cassandra creates that safe place.

In an interview with Teen Vogue about her new Tarot deck, Cassandra said,

I want other black people who felt like tarot wasn’t for them to finally feel like it is. New Age spirituality practices might hint at being inspired by African culture, but they don’t

feel like they're for us even though divination has been a part of traditional African culture as much as any other culture (Sarit 2017).

One other Black woman I interviewed spoke about using spirituality as part of the healing work of activism. These activists also use spiritual methods to direct their work. For instance, one woman decided to avoid a town hall event following threats from a White supremacist and a premonition she had about getting into a deadly car accident. She urged people to carpool and call upon other activists, such as those from Redneck Revolt and the Democratic Socialists of America, to act as guards of the other activists. Spiritual activists may also call upon other people to collectively send positive energy to high-stakes circumstances, such as what occurred during a trial of a man, Jefferson, who faced racial profiling. Tampa activists' involvement in Jefferson's experience with racial profiling and police brutality will be discussed below. Spirituality as part of activism is not unique to this community (Rodriguez 1998, 104). Rodriguez suggested that spirituality in activism is used as a "guiding" and "comforting force" (Rodriguez 1998, 107).

Overt Activism

Protesting in the streets is a small part of activism, but likely the most well-known action because of its conspicuous nature and the presentation of it in the media. It is just one form of overt activism, or activism that is a clear and public act of resistance. For example, the Restorative Justice Coalition advocates for people who have been victims of police brutality and racial profiling. As shown in the introduction, this group supports the family of Andrew Joseph III, a boy who was killed after being racially profiled and ejected from the Florida State Fair in 2014. The group, in coalition with other individuals and groups such as the Bay Area Dream Defenders and Black Lives Matter, organized a vigil to memorialize Andrew, gathered signatures on a petition, contacted and lobbied representatives, helped organize and publicize a multiday

fundraising event, and planned to birddog an elected official who was on the fair planning committee. One interviewee, Meg, explained birddogging, “That’s when you go to a fundraising event, or an ice cream social, and a politician that you’re targeting is there and maybe you walk up, ask for a handshake and then ask them a question they definitely can’t answer” or are not prepared to answer.

This organization advocates for other victims, such as a Sidney Richardson, a Black veteran who was shot and killed by a police officer while having a PTSD episode (Marrero 2018). According to an activist and friend to Richardson, he was shot in the head while holding, not wielding, a machete the day after he sought help from the Tampa Police Department during a mental health crisis. The Restorative Justice Coalition and other activists have appealed through social media and to the Tampa Police Department for a federal investigation, for the release of the police report, and for changes within the force, such as better training in mental health crises (Marrero 2018). This was done with phone calls, public posts, and a small group of activists going directly to one Tampa Police Department building. Overt protesting may become a part of this campaign, for instance it was suggested that the activists should stage a sit-in at a government building, but this example shows the wide range of activities that are considered overt activism.

Two activists I interviewed are running for local office in the 2018 election for Hillsborough County commissioners, Jada and Damon. Jada told me, “the thing that really sparked [running for office], being Black, woman, and queer in America and in this county, Hillsborough County, I see no representation of me in local government whatsoever. However, I see the oppressive nature that I deal with day in and day out as a Black queer woman in local government time and time again, so when you say how does being an activist relate to me

running for office and I say it directly affects me.” Winning an election and taking office is not the only potential outcome of their efforts. While campaigning, activists are able to raise issues to public awareness, promote their own causes, and set the political agenda. They may also hope to disrupt the typical two-party division during the election, by showing that an independent or third-party candidate can still make a strong showing.

An act of overt activism can also be small. For example, overt activism can involve driving people to their court appearances and sitting in the court as moral support. Jefferson is a Black Tampa resident who was racially profiled while walking home. In court, the officer who stopped him testified that she found him suspicious for wearing a sweatshirt on a July night. He refused to talk to this officer when she stopped him and angrily kept walking home. Another officer showed up and both physically tried to stop Jefferson. According to the police, Jefferson hit one officer on the side of his head. Jefferson was tasered and punched in the face in front of his door, which was caught on camera and has been used as evidence in court (Restorative Justice Coalition 2017). He was charged with two felonies: battery on a law enforcement officer and resisting an officer with violence (Hillsborough County Clerk of Court 2018). He did not commit any crime otherwise that would have led to him being stopped and he was not charged with any separate crime.

The Restorative Justice Coalition has been driving Jefferson to his numerous court appearances and public defender meetings, often sitting as the only people on his side of the courtroom. This act is visible resistance, because it shows to public defenders, the judge, and the jury that Jefferson has people advocating for him. The fact that two of these advocates are also White women may act as a counterbalance to the typical narrative of Black male criminality and may offer Jefferson some legitimacy in the eyes of the court.

The Restorative Justice Coalition also circulated a petition to dismiss Jefferson's charges. Efforts to find a pro bono lawyer, such as through NAACP and ACLU, were unsuccessful, so driving Jefferson to his appearances and sitting in the courtroom as clear advocates of Jefferson were often the best and only tactics available to us. However, in late February of 2018, the Restorative Justice Coalition was able to meet with State Attorney Andrew Warren. In the private meeting, the State Attorney agreed that the validity of the stop was questionable. On the morning of Jefferson's jury trial a few days later, his charges were unexpectedly dismissed.

The internet is home to overt activism as well. Liam, a White activist who reported that he does not belong to any local groups (though he does attend events held by local groups), spoke extensively about online participation in activism during an interview. Liam characterizes his activism as, "just using my privilege in whatever way that I can." He said that he engages in self-education and educating others online, actions that he sees as forms of activism. He spends ample time learning about activists on the internet, such as civil rights leaders, abolitionists, leftist radical Black leaders, the Black Panther Party, Frida Kahlo, and Paul Robeson. Liam and other activists apply online learning to conversations in real life in an attempt to share knowledge and teach others about White supremacy and patriarchy.

The internet also offers a method of joining activism worldwide and educating international readers about social justice efforts across the world. For example, Liam was able to donate for Gaza relief in Palestine to pay for clothes and solar panels over the internet. Liam said,

Even though I'm pretty much living below poverty, I'm still giving what I can cause you know every little bit helps, especially for the smaller donations to hurricane victims or

donations to protesters on the ground who need supplies. Something simple as like food and water keep people marching on a full stomach.

Tampa activists in this research project engage in a myriad of activities to support the community, such as offering spiritual healing or funding, and to support the spread of anti-racist ideology, such as talking and teaching others. These actions connect to their ideologies of anti-capitalism and intersectionality. By promoting economic actions, such as a boycott or driving a man to court who does not have the means to get himself there, activists are resisting and subverting capitalism. In advocating for the criminal justice system to end racial profiling and sharing information about racial persecution in general, the activists are promoting a dialogue that African Americans have had for centuries – that they are wrongly treated based on their race – and legitimizing the lived experiences of marginalized people. Having had direct or indirect experiences with racism and motivated by a sense of injustice, these activists can use their knowledge and desire to right wrongs.

Acting out Activism through Group Dynamics

Consequential social dynamics exist both between and within Tampa activist groups. On the more “radical” leftist side of the racial justice community, some organizations are looked down upon for not rejecting prevailing values in American culture as much as the radical activists believe they should. These values include trusting police, believing the criminal justice system is just, and accepting conditional donations/wages for activist work. The majority of the people I interviewed would classify themselves as radical leftists, though I also interviewed a few people who would not and who work with organizations that are subjects of such critique. The critique intends to both change these organizations and discourage other people from

duplicating them, but that does not stop these groups from forming friendships and collaborations.

While I believe that all of these groups are working for positive change, there have been clashes between them because of differing ideologies, goals, or tactics for progressive change. For example, activists from various organizations such as the Sex Worker Solidarity Network, Restorative Justice Coalition, and Democratic Socialists of America protested at an event of a popular and slightly more moderate activist group. The moderate group had spent donation money on hiring police to attend the event with the idea that the police could protect the attendees from violence. Many racial justice activists in Tampa see police as doing the opposite. Rather than believing that police are at protests to protect them, these activists believe that police are there to protect property, stifle protesters' First Amendment Rights, and control the physical movements of protesters. The more radical groups contacted the organizers of the event, asking them to announce to the attendees that there will be police or to not hire the police at all. The organizers of the event declined and then uninvited the radical activists from speaking at the event. In protest, these activists organized an action at the event advocating that police should never be welcomed to an activist event because people of color, undocumented immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people would be in danger. Though this was a tense instance, it should be emphasized that such lack of cohesion is unusual. After this particular disagreement, leaders from both sides of the issue met to work out their differences. There often is much collaboration between all leftist activist groups in Tampa because they share common goals and reap the benefits of pooled resources.

Tensions exist within groups as well. I mentioned above two examples where activists perceived racism from within organizations they are a part of – Get Covered America and the

Sex Worker Solidarity Network. Lily, a Black woman, spoke about how White people's ignorance, especially older White people's ignorance, can lead to racism within groups. She gave an example,

I remember I was at a Women's March event and this older couple I saw they were like, "Oh you know you guys get a lot of incentives like housing and all these other things."

And I was like, "You really think as a person of color it's really easy to get fucking housing?" I said, "Have you heard of redlining?" And then they're like, "no"...

She then went on to explain to the couple what redlining is. I think this quote and other observations I have made show that activists' first instinct is to believe that "mild" (to use Lily's word) forms of racism can be corrected with education and are the result of ignorance. Some tensions within the group have more serious consequences, such as the exiling of an activist from the group. Most activists are treated with compassion, acceptance, and when they make a small mistake, correction. However, some mistakes are considered too delinquent. For example, when a couple of activists came forward to accuse someone of sexual assault, the victims were believed by most and their wishes heard. As a result, the person accused of assault was socially shamed and exiled from the Tampa activist community.

As this chapter has shown, activists resist the status quo in a number of ways, covertly, overtly, and within their own spaces. Covert activism can take the form of silent protest, spiritual work, or a choice to reject the cultural value of monogamy. These are less obvious forms of resistance that contribute to a movement, even in small ways. Overt acts of resistance include rallies, lobbying, calling representatives, participating in online discussions, and working to elect a candidate to office. These acts are more obvious and more visible than covert acts of resistance. Even within their own community, Tampa racial justice activists continue to resist the status quo

by calling attention to and educating people who have promoted values, ideas, or actions that the activists see as opposing the ideologies of anti-capitalism and intersectionality or perpetuating discrimination.

Conclusion

Racial justice activists in Tampa Bay recognize the power of racism and have organized themselves into a community structured as a movement of social transformation to oppose it. Racism is an ideology of white supremacy aimed at keeping one group on top and eliminating the rights of another and is a tool of oppression (Rasmussen 2011; Alexander 2012). Qualitative research methods – interviewing and participant observation – have made clear how activists in this study collectively organize in order to change minds, change policy, educate, heal, and ultimately improve their local community. Their acts of resistance, both covert and overt and pursued inside and outside their communities are examples of how they facilitate change that impacts real people in their everyday lives.

This research comes at a period in American history that has experienced a rise of populism, nationalism, and nativism in government through the Trump administration and popular support for it. Activists in Tampa and throughout America have reacted to the discrimination that such the Trump administration legitimates. However, I have sought to show in this paper that Tampa activists have been engaged in social justice work for a broader span of time than dictated by current or immediate policies and politics. Tampa activists have been working for racial justice long before Donald Trump was elected the 45th president of the United States in 2016. He represents much of what activists are against, but it would be better to characterize these activists as for certain ideals: diversity in politics, institutionalized intersectionality, community policing devoid of racism, an end to exploitation through

capitalism, and a fair and smaller-scale criminal justice system, to name a few. Their understanding of the world as failing to treat all people as individuals with diverse personal histories and needs transcends one administration and should be seen as a national and global issue. Activists have and will continue to work for their ideals past a return to more liberal and progressive policymakers.

Racial justice activists in Tampa have succeeded in subtle and visible ways. Their acts of healing within their community and passive resistance, though subtle, have real effects, as I have shown. More visibly, they call the public and elected officials' attention to problems, recommend policy changes, and share research. For example, the Restorative Justice Coalition shared to a Tampa City Council member a model used in Chicago of an independent review board that reviews complaints levied against the police. The organization recommended the model to councilperson Guido Maniscalco who was impressed and decided to advocate for it within the Council. More noticeably to the public, racial justice activists succeeded in removing the Confederate Monument in Downtown Tampa through lobbying, protesting, and speaking during public meetings. As mentioned previously, activists were able to advocate for the dismissal of Jefferson's charges of assaulting an officer and legitimize his cry of racial profiling and police brutality. Activists are also educators whose messages are picked up by the public and become integrated into political rhetoric and politics in general.

Tampa activists argue that the lives of Black people are discarded through racially motivated police stops, incarceration, and police killings, and are shown they are discardable through unprosecuted hate crimes or brutality and unequal access to the resources of society, among others (Collins 2014, 4). The aphorism and rallying cry "Black lives matter" exposes the false assumption that all people living in America have equal access to life and liberty while also

declaring unquestionably that Black people's lives have inherent value. "Black lives matter" brings our attention to the truth that Black people in particular are treated as if their lives are "throwaway," or less valuable than White lives and thus discardable (Jackson 2016, 167). Tim Wise in *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* explains that unlike Black people in America, White people are "born to belonging," or privileged enough that their very existence appears to prove their worth, while Black people's existence does not (Wise 2011, 3).

In Tampa, the phrase "Black lives matter" extends to other groups who are oppressed due to their race/ethnicity or who are victims of government sanctioned violence. At a Black Lives Matter protest, I have heard leaders direct the protesters to chant similar phrases such as "indigenous lives matter" and "Muslim lives matter," thus calling attention to the various ways in which all marginalized groups are treated as discardable.

Activism is an important part of the political process, such as the suffragist, civil rights, and abolitionist movements. The Tampa racial justice activist community exemplifies this with their consistent dedication and persistent attempts to break down American and international institutions that promote racism and other forms of discrimination. The issues activists work to solve have endured decades, even centuries in America and elsewhere. By working locally, Tampa activists chip away at the structures that institutionalize racism, as many other communities do so across the country.

This research adds to the discipline of anthropology because it is an application of critical race theory to current activism. Black feminist thought has a legacy of activism that this research seeks to build upon and advance. The study is both an application and an examination of philosophies prevalent in the civil rights era and in Black feminist thought. It contributes to a history and analysis of activism in America by showing the continuation and transformation of

racial justice activism, specifically in Tampa Bay, Florida. It adds to a long-term body of literature focused on the study of race, activism, and policing in Tampa, Florida spanning twenty five years, from 1993-2018. In 1993, Anthony-Davis published her thesis entitled “Do Law Enforcement Agencies Equitably Serve and Protect all Communities?: An Ethnographic Study of Police Subculture in Tampa” (Anthony-Davis 1993). She offered a snapshot of policing in Tampa in the early 90s, discussing and analyzing how police subculture contributes to unfair treatment of Black communities in Tampa (Anthony-Davis 1993). In 1998, Rodriguez published an article on the narratives shared by Black women who participated as activists in Tampa (Rodriguez 1998). My research builds on these previous studies and thus contributes to a long-term perspective on how race is mediated in Tampa.

Limitations and Future Research

This research project which examined the community of left-leaning racial justice activists in Tampa Bay, Florida offers a snapshot of about half a year of activism in one city. During that time, the community underwent changes as new political crises arose, activists came or left the community, and different issues were chosen as a focus. As mentioned, time was a limitation of this study. In the future, continued research on this community would be revealing in how activist communities may change, grow, or wane. Such long-term research of the community or longitudinal research of individuals currently in the community may be a good record of activism during this time in America’s history. Moreover, research of left-leaning racial justice activism in other parts of the country and even the world may be revealing of how different communities respond to injustices and how interconnected the communities and cultures of activists across distances are. This research revealed thriving activism online. A study of online activism as its own location could complement such a comparative project.

The limitations of this research project centered around my entry into the community and around practical issues. As shown in the anecdote in the subsection “Practicing Intersectionality in the Activist Community,” I was often regarded with suspicion for a few reasons – my Whiteness and my unfamiliarity with some activists in the community. The relationships I had with activists of high standing, including Damon and Olivia, coupled with my habitual presence at activist events eventually allowed me to be regarded with less suspicion and as a member of the community. As more people began to recognize and trust me, people became more likely to speak to me and agree to an interview, especially if another activist they trusted vouched for me. This limitation is a reminder of the vital need to create strong rapport and familiarity not just with community leaders, but with activists who follow these leaders.

Practical issues this project faced are common among other anthropological studies. For example, lack of time to gather the data limited the number of people who could be interviewed. Additionally, a lack of funding also decreased time because I could not travel to out of town events other activists attended and I had to direct some of my time to working for a paying job. Other limitations included difficulties with lack of response from potential interviewees or cancellations of interviews.

Recommendations

Tampa’s racial justice activist community as portrayed in this study is complex, diverse, dedicated, well-informed, and highly organized people motivated to improve society for all. I chose to be in this community, and Restorative Justice Coalition in particular, because I felt that I was finally able to recognize and harness the tools for racial justice and prison reform through the example and guidance of these activists. The value they place on diversity corresponds to the values I hope to see spread throughout the country and world. The activists I have organized with

often repeat the phrase, “no one’s free until we’re all free,” thus suggesting that they are committed to improving the lives of everyone through society-wide change.

The press and popular media often characterize activists’ intentions, actions, and community too narrowly and sometimes inaccurately. This can be relatively benign, such as the inaccurate portrayal of Restorative Justice Coalition (RJC) in the Plant City Observer (Figueroa 2017). The reporter for the article “City Commission Meeting Again Sparks Protest” made small mistakes in his report of this meeting we disrupted, which was described above in the subsection “Anti-Capitalist Ideology in Practice.” He implied that all of the activists attending were members of RJC, though Meg and I were the only members present, among more than ten other activists from organizations he did not mention (Figueroa 2017). The reporter also told me that he tried to analyze at what point during the commission meeting that relations deteriorated, not realizing activists planned a disruption when the mayor decreased their speaking time with the purpose of being escorted out by the police. While it may have looked like activists were being forced from the room, they left willingly. These activists wanted to draw police attention in order to show both strength and the tendency of police to stifle free speech with force. If the police had not responded as they did, it would have undermined the intent of the action because activists would not have been able to demonstrate what they see as oppressive police actions.

Understanding the arguments this paper makes, a reporter in this situation could question if activists are staging a conflict to achieve a goal.

However, the narrow portrayal of activists in the media can have larger implications. Throughout the research process, I have learned that there are many ways to be a racial justice activist – moderate or radical, on the front lines or on the internet, with speeches and chants or with art that speaks for itself. Racial justice activists whom I encountered and worked with in

Tampa Bay are highly dedicated and well-intentioned people who welcome people into their community who are abused, oppressed, and/or unwelcome in wider American culture. In showing what it is like to be part of the activist community, this study has striven to represent activists as complex. I urge media, politicians, and the wider public to understand and better characterize the complexity of activism and the important role it has in the political process.

Activists by nature are people who loudly question the status quo and work against engrained cultural values that many people hold dear. Media outlets often characterize them as causing conflict, rather than as people working to end a conflict. This distinction needs to be more apparent. These actors, particularly the media, must reach out to activists in order to cultivate long-term trust and mutually beneficial relationships with them. I believe activist anthropologists, straddling both activism and academia, are well positioned to bring this issue to the attention of the media. Anthropologists are cultural brokers and likely have more legitimacy in the eyes of the public and media as scientists with college degrees. Anthropologists should urge news organizations they have relationships with to represent activists correctly and to call upon the expertise of activists. As I have shown throughout this paper, activists are well-versed in political issues. Many activists “specialize” in issues such as affordable housing or policing reform and should be treated as experts whether they have college degrees or not. In this way, the rhetoric can shift from activists as angry rabble-rousers to activists as passionate community members driven by integrity, personal motivations, and ideologies that frame their perspectives.

The purpose of this research was not to give an insider’s knowledge to the institutions and people that the activists feel harmed or targeted by. I argue instead that such an action would be the antithesis of activist values and values of applied anthropologists, if not the discipline of anthropology as a whole (Society for Applied Anthropology 2018). Anthropologists who have

studied other movements for racial justice wrote, “We must refuse to supply data or make reports to increase the resources of any agency that functions, for whatever reason, to prolong the existing sociopolitical position of the minority poor” (Valentine and Valentine 1970, 414). They found this “contrary to the underlying ethical values of anthropology” (Valentine and Valentine 1970, 414). My experience studying Tampa activists has made this even clearer. After learning about the discrimination people face in all aspects of society, I cannot support through information sharing or other means the institutions that further discrimination and oppression, such as the various local police departments. Rather, I would recommend people and groups working for change in their own communities to take note of the work Tampa activists have done and the tactics they have used to achieve them – uniting through ideology, elevating the voices of the marginalized, and collaborating across various organizations working for similar goals.

In this paper, I have discussed the “culture of resistance” of one particular activist community in Tampa. Their “culture of resistance” can be characterized in many ways, but I have chosen to describe and analyze only a few elements of that culture – what experiences and knowledge motivate these activists, what ideologies are taught and accepted, and how they choose to resist. Thus, I have offered a snapshot of a leftist Tampa activist community’s culture in 2017 and 2018 – a culture that continues to transform.

References

1987. "Toxic Waste and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites." Nuclear Regulatory Commission: United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice.
1980. *FBI File on the Black Panther Party, North Carolina*. U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation.
<https://archive.org/details/FBI-BPP-North-Carolina>
2010. General Profile Hillsborough, FL. edited by United States Census Bureau. Censtats: United States Census Bureau.
2017. "Criminal Justice Facts." The Sentencing Project.
<http://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/>.
2017. "Tampa Democratic Socialists of America Facebook Page"
<https://www.facebook.com/tampadsa/>
2018. "About Mutual Aid Disaster Relief" MutualAidDisasterRelief.org.
<https://mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/about/>.
2018. "Solutions" *Campaign Zero*.
www.joincampaignzero.org
2018. State of Florida vs Washington, Robert Earl. edited by Hillsborough County Clerk of Court.
2018. "Statement of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities." Society for Applied Anthropology.

<https://www.sfaa.net/about/ethics/>.

2018. "Unpacking Racism 201."

https://www.facebook.com/groups/2389415864617024/?ref=br_rs.

Anthony-Davis, Brenda. 1993. "Do Law Enforcement Agencies Equitably Serve and Protect all Communities?: An Ethnographic Study of Police Subculture in Tampa." MA, Applied Anthropology, University of South Florida.

Alexander, Michelle. 2012. *The new Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York, N.Y: New Press.

Barker, Colin, Laurence Cox, and John Krinsky. 2014. *Marxism and Social Movements*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.

Bernard, H. Russell. 2011. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 5th ed. Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press.

Boyd, Herb. 1981. "Blacks and the Police State: A Case Study of Detroit." *The Black Scholar* 12 (1):58-61.

Boyle, Kevin. 2004. *Arc of Justice*. New York: Henry Hold and Company, LLC.

Bradley, Sarah. 2011. "'Rethinking Intimacy': Anarchist Non-Monogamy and the Embodiment of Resistance." MA, Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies, Brandeis University.

Brown, Jacqueline Nassy. 2005. *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Butler, Michael S. 2015. Tampa, Fla., Police Investigated For Crackdown On Black Bicyclists. In *All Things Considered*: National Public Radio, Inc. (NPR).

- Chatmon, Christopher P. and Vajra M. Watson. 2018. "Decolonizing School Systems: Racial Justice, Radical Healing, and Educational Equity inside Oakland Unified School District" *Voices for Urban Education* 48:7-12.
- Collins, Patricia. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge: New York, New York.
- Collins, Patricia. 2012. "Social Inequality, Power, and Politics: Intersectionality and American Pragmatism in Dialogue." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26 (2):442-457.
- Collins, Patricia Hill and Gloria González-López. 2013. "Truth-Telling and Intellectual Activism." *Contexts* 12 (1):36-41.
- De Certeau, Michel. 2011. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic. 2013. *Critical Race Theory*. Edited by Richard Delgado. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- DiNatale, Sara. 2016. "Two Years after Andrew Joseph III, 14, died outside the Florida State Fair, his Parents' Fight is just Starting" *Tampa Bay Times*.
- DuVernay, Ava. 2016. *13th*. Netflix.
- Dunn, Ronnie A. 2016. "Racial Profiling: A Persistent Civil Rights Challenge Even in the Twenty-First Century" *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 66 (4):957-992.
- Figuroa, Daniel. 2017. "City Commission Meeting Again Sparks Protest." *Plant City Observer* <https://www.plantcityobserver.com/article/city-commission-meeting-again-sparks-protest>.
- Fine, Ben and Alfredo Saad-Filho. 2016. *Marx's 'Capital'*. London: Pluto Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1998. "Deep Hanging Out." *New York Review of Books*. 45(16).

- Gerlach, Luther P. and Virginia H. Hine. 1970a. *People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation*. Indianapolis MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Gerlach, Luther P. and Virginia H. Hine. 1970b. "The Social Organization of a Movement of Revolutionary Change: Case Study, Black Power" in *Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives*. 387. New York: Free Press.
- Gravlee, Clarence. 2008. "How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1992. "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1):6-23.
- Harris, Angela P. 2013. "Race and Essentialism in Legal Theory" in *Critical Race Theory*. Edited by Richard Delgado. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Harrison, Faye. 1998. "Introduction: Expanding the Discourse on Race." *American Anthropologist* 100 (3):609-631.
- Harrison, Faye. 2013. "Navigating Feminist Activist Ethnography." In *Feminist Activist Ethnography*, edited by Iris Lopez Christa Craven, Dana-Ain Davis, Mary K. Anglin, Khiara M. Bridges, Elizabeth Chin, Aimee Cox, and Fay V. Harrison. Lexington Books.
- Hayle, Steven, Scot Wortley, and Julian Tanner. 2016. "Race, Street Life, and Policing: Implications for Racial Profiling." *Canadian Journal of Criminology & Criminal Justice* 58 (3):322-353.
- Hayes, Chris. 2017. *A Colony in a Nation*. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company. Mobile Version.

- Heydari, Farhang and Ariele Le Grand. 2018. "Report to the Tampa Citizens Review Board Summarizing Public Feedback on Tampa Police Department Policies and Practices" *Policing Project*. NYU School of Law.
- hooks, bell. 2015. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Isoke, Z. 2013. *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance, The Politics of Intersectionality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Ioimo, Ralph, Rachael S. Tears, Leslie A. Meadows, J. Bret Becton, and Michael T. Charles. 2007. "The Police View of Bias-Based Policing." *Police Quarterly* 10 (3):270-287.
- Jackson, Antoinette. 2016. "Exhuming the Dead and Talking to the Living: The 1914 Fire at the Florida Industrial School for Boys—Invoking the Uncanny as a Site of Analysis" *Anthropology and Humanism* 41(2): 158-177.
- Jackson, Antoinette. 2010. "Changing Ideas about Heritage and Heritage Resource Management in Historically Segregated Communities" *Transforming Anthropology* 18(1): 80-92.
- Janes, Craig R. and Kitty K. Corbett. 2009. "Anthropology and Global Health" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38:167-183.
- Kraska, Peter B. 2001. *Militarizing the American Criminal Justice System: The Changing Roles of the Armed Forces and the Police*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Kuzawa, Christopher W. and Elizabeth Sweet. 2009. "Epigenetics and the Embodiment of Race: Developmental Origins of US Racial Disparities in Cardiovascular Health." *American Journal of Human Biology* 21:2-15.
- Legewie, Joscha. 2016. "Racial Profiling and Use of Force in Police Stops: How Local Events Trigger Periods of Increased Discrimination." *American Journal of Sociology* 122 (2):379-424.

Luban, Sarit. 2017. Tarot 101: Basic Guide to Tarot. *Teen Vogue*. Accessed October 2, 2017.

March, William. 2017. "Lawrence McClure wins Hillsborough's House District 58 Seat." *Tampa Bay Times*.

Marrero, Tony. 2017. "Southern Heritage group draws fire for posting personal information of Confederate statue opponents."

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/southern-heritage-group-draws-fire-for-posting-personal-information-of/2334690>.

Marrero, Tony. 2018. "Friends say man shot by Tampa police was former U.S. Marine with PTSD." *Tampa Bay Times*.

http://www.tampabay.com/news/publicsafety/Friends-say-man-shot-by-Tampa-police-was-former-U-S-Marine-with-PTSD_165411092.

Marx, Karl. 1978a. "Capital Part 1." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 221-293. New York, N.Y: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Marx, Karl. 1978b. "Gundrisse." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 221-293. New York, N.Y: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

McIntosh, Peggy. 2015. "Extending the Knapsack: Using the White Privilege Analysis to Examine Conferred Advantage and Disadvantage" *Women and Therapy* 38(3-4): 232-245.

McLaurin, Irma. "Introduction: Forging a Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics of Black Feminist Anthropology" In *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*. Edited by Irma McLaurin. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press.

- Montgomery, Ben, Natalie Watson, Connie Humburg, Katie Mettler, and Neil Bedi. 2017. "Why Cops Shoot." *Tampa Bay Times*.
<http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2017/investigations/florida-police-shootings/database/>
- Parker, Laurence and Marvin Lynn. 2002. "What's Race Got to Do With It? Critical Race Theory's Conflicts With and Connections to Qualitative Research Methodology and Epistemology." *Qualitative Inquiry* 8(1): 7-22.
- Polanco, Mieka Brand. 2014. *Historically Black: Imagining Community in a Black Historic District*. New York University Press: New York.
- Rasmussen, Kim Su. 2011. "Foucault's Genealogy of Racism." *Theory, Culture and Society* 28 (5):34-51.
- Restorative Justice Coalition. 2017. "TPD-Washington 1-4."
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYfoSdO_IiqPTTUQ8Ck6A4g/videos.
- Rios, Victor M. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York University: New York University Press.
- Rodriguez, Cheryl. 1998. "Activist Stories: Culture and Continuity in Black Women's Narratives of Grassroots Community Work." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19 (2):94-112.
- Scott, James. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1uh
- Sentencing Project, The. 2016. "Criminal Justice Facts." The Sentencing Project.
- Stevenson, Bryan. 2014. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

- Tarnpolsky, Noga. 2018. "U.S. declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital has Sparked Worldwide Anger. But There's Been Plenty of Precedent" *Los Angeles Times*.
<http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-israel-jerusalem-status-20180102-htmlstory.html>
- Taylor, Keeanga Yamahtta. 2016. *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.
- Thomas, Paul. 1991. "Critical Reception: Marx Then and Now." In *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*. Edited by Terrell Carver. Pages 23-54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Valentine, Charles A. and Betty Lou Valentine. 1970. "Making the Scene, Digging the Action, and Telling it Like it is: Anthropologists at Work in the Dark Ghetto." In *Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by John F. Szweid Norman E. Whitten Jr. New York: The Free Press.
- Williams, Bianca C. 2015a. #BlackLivesMatter: Anti-Black Racism, Police Violence, and Resistance. *Cultural Anthropology*. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/696-blacklivesmatter-anti-black-racism-police-violence-and-resistance>
- Williams, Bianca C. 2015b. Introduction: #BlackLivesMatter. In *Cultural Anthropology*. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/688-introduction-blacklivesmatter>
- Wilson, Charles P., Shirley A. Wilson, and Malane Thou. 2015. "Perceptions of African American Police Officers on Racial Profiling in Small Agencies." *Journal of Black Studies* 46 (5):482-505.
- Wise, Tim. 2011. *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*. Soft Skull Press.
- Yelvington, Kevin. 1995. *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in a Caribbean Workplace*. Temple University Press: Philadelphia.

Appendix A: Demographic Breakdown of Interviewees

	Race	Gender	Age	Religion	Nationality	Ethnicity	Sexuality	Political Affiliation	Schooling
1	White	Female	27	None	American	White American	Lesbian, panromantic	Independent, registered Democrat	Some college
2	White	Female	28	Nonreligious	American	White	Pan	Left	Some graduate school
3	Black	Female	28	Don't know	American	Black	Queer	Democrat	None
4	Black, African American, person of color	Female	28	Spiritual	American	African American	Pansexual	Extreme Liberal	Bachelors
5	Black	Female	31	Spiritual agnostic	American	Black American	Pansexual	Registered Democrat but not strong	Bachelors
6	White	Male	32	Atheist	American	Caucasian	Pansexual	Socialist	Some college, trade school
7	Black	Female	24	Agnostic, n/a	Jamaican and American	Jamaican	Heterosexual	Independent	Some graduate school
8	Filipino/Asian American	Male	35	Catholic	American	Filipino American	Heterosexual	Democratic Socialist	Bachelors
9	White	Male	28	Spiritual agnostic	American	Italian	Gay	Liberal, Progressive	Associates
10	African American	Female	40	Agnostic	American	Black	Heterosexual	Democrat	Bachelors
11	Biracial (Black and White)	Female	35	Agnostic	American, permanent resident of Belize	Biracial	Bisexual	Independent, registered Democrat	Some graduate school

In this chart, I reproduce self-reported identities of my interview sample. Though this chart is helpful in understanding the demographics of my sample, it is difficult to show the nuance of identity in this format. For example, the third person I interviewed paused significantly before answering “female” as her gender, suggesting that her gender identity does not fit neatly into binary gender identities. Some readers may be confused, for example, in the ways in which Black/African American people identified their races and ethnicities. It should be noted that political affiliations are also more nuanced than displayed. For instance, multiple interviewees

identified themselves as liberal, independent, left, etc. while also reporting that they are registered Democrats, but do not feel a strong affiliation with that. Florida has closed primaries, and some reported this as the reason they are registered Democrats. In the future, it will be prudent to ask, “what are your political leanings?” rather than “what is your political affiliation?” if I want to get a clearer picture of someone’s political beliefs. This chart makes clear that essentialism and reducing the lives of people to various demographic identities is negligent oversimplification (Harris 1995, 255).

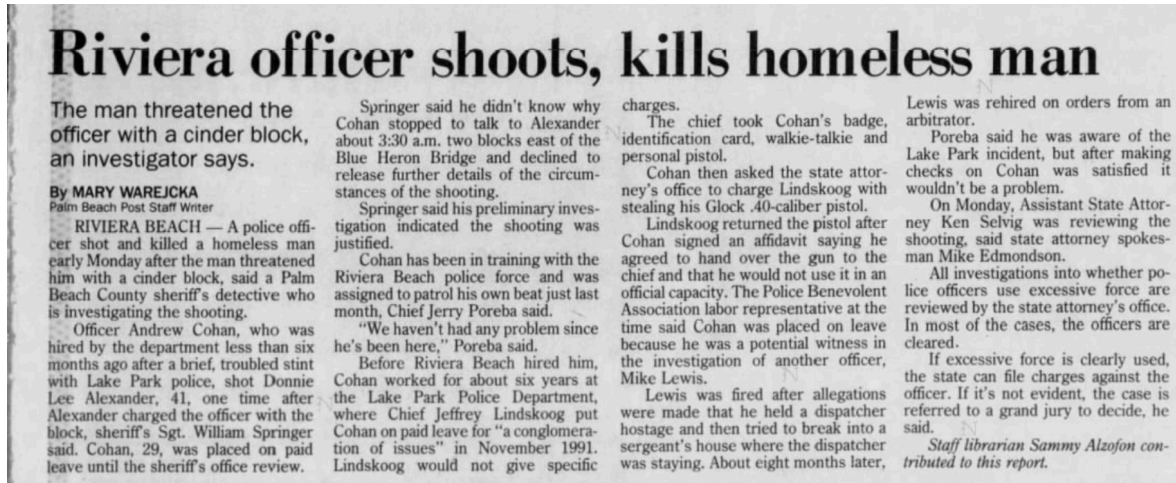
Appendix B: Sample Interview Guide

1. I want to know how you identify yourself. What is your: Race? Age? Religion? Ethnicity? Nationality? Gender? Sexual orientation? Political affiliation? Amount of schooling?
2. What groups do you organize with? How is that organization(s) structured and run?
3. What is race?
4. What is racial justice?
5. What do you do to achieve racial justice? What strategies do you use?
6. What would achieving racial justice look like?
7. How and why did you get involve in racial justice activism?
8. What institutions need to change in order to achieve racial justice?
9. What experiences have you had with the police or criminal justice system?
10. How do you interact with the police as an activist?
11. Are there barriers for becoming a racial justice activist for people like you?
12. Do you think it is possible to ally with the police to achieve racial justice?
13. How have activists succeeded in Tampa in recent years?
14. What are the different roles of people of different races in racial justice activism?
15. What results do you want to see from your activism?
16. What are some problems you and other activists/community organizers face when working for racial justice?

17. What needs do grassroots organizations fill in Tampa?

18. Is there anything else you want to tell me about being a racial justice activist?

Appendix C: May 28, 1996 Newspaper Clipping from the Palm Beach Post



This newspaper clipping details the shooting of Cassandra's father.

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approval Form



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

August 18, 2017

Emily Weisenberger
Anthropology
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#: Pro00031768
Title: Activists for Racial Justice in Tampa, Florida

Study Approval Period: 8/17/2017 to 8/17/2018

Dear Ms. Weisenberger:

On 8/17/2017, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[IRB Study Protocol V1.docx](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[IRB Consent Form Activists.docx.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,



Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board