

# UC Santa Barbara

## UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Framing Murder: Black Lives Matter as Reproductive Justice

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2tp554f9>

### Author

Chatillon, Anna

### Publication Date

2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Framing Murder: Black Lives Matter as Reproductive Justice

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Sociology

by

Anna H. Chatillon(-Reed)

Committee in charge:

Professor George Lipsitz, Co-Chair

Professor Beth Schneider, Co-Chair

Professor Zakiya T. Luna

March 2017

The thesis of Anna H. Chatillon(-Reed) is approved.

---

Zakiya T. Luna

---

George Lipsitz, Committee Co-Chair

---

Beth Schneider, Committee Co-Chair

February 2017

Framing Murder: Black Lives Matter as Reproductive Justice

Copyright © 2017

by

Anna H. Chatillon(-Reed)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my committee, Professors George Lipsitz, Beth Schneider, and Zakiya Luna, for their support for this “project in our care” and for their feedback through several drafts of the manuscript. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge Dr. Wendy Rosen, whose guidance was invaluable in seeing this project to completion. To those people killed, assaulted, or otherwise targeted by racialized police brutality, and to their families: I dedicate this thesis to you.

## ABSTRACT

### Framing Murder: Black Lives Matter as Reproductive Justice

by

Anna H. Chatillon(-Reed)

Feminist and anti-racist organizing in the United States has often concentrated on single axes of oppression: gender and race, respectively (Crenshaw 1991). Yet intersectionality — which poses that such systems of oppression interact, and therefore cannot be understood alone (Crenshaw 1989) — is increasingly invoked not only in academic work but in a broad range of activist spaces. On the Black Lives Matter website and in interviews, for instance, movement leaders have framed the movement as intersectional. More specifically, they have tied it to reproductive justice, a movement whose advocates argue that racial and gender oppression are linked and shape women’s reproductive needs.

This study explores how four longstanding and prominent national feminist and reproductive rights organizations understand and portray Black Lives Matter and racialized police violence. Using social movement frame analysis, it asks if and how publications posted between 2012 and 2016 on the websites of Feminist Majority Foundation, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Organization for Women, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America frame Black Lives Matter, and the racialized police violence to which it responds, as relevant or irrelevant to the organizations’ missions and goals (the “relevance frame”). The analysis concludes that three of the organizations under study —

Feminist Majority Foundation, National Organization for Women, and NARAL — describe racialized police violence as relevant to their work. (Planned Parenthood, did not publish any documents that fit the study parameters.) They base this relevance on a framing of Black Lives Matter as a reproductive justice movement, and racialized police violence as a reproductive justice concern.

The organizations indicate three specific ways they understand racialized police violence to be a matter of reproductive justice: state violence violates Black parents' right to raise their children to adulthood safely, police officers disproportionately perpetrate sexual violence on Black women, and non-sexual police brutality is directed not only at Black men but also at Black women. The organizations build these arguments using three discursive maneuvers I argue are best understood as types of frame articulation (Benford and Snow 2000): *frame signaling* (using language that implies the relevance frame, without contextualizing or directly stating it), *frame situating* (explaining the historical and structural context that renders the frame legible, without directly stating it), and *frame naming* (directly stating the frame).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction .....	1
II. Literature Review.....	5
A. Social Movement Theory: Race and Framing .....	6
B. Critical Race Theory and Critical White Studies.....	8
C. Black Feminist Theory: Intersectionality and Reproductive Justice ....	10
D. Social Movements for Gender Justice .....	15
III. Methodology.....	19
IV. Findings.....	24
A. Black Parents’ Right to Raise Children Safely to Adulthood.....	26
1. Frame Signaling.....	26
2. Frame Situating.....	29
3. Frame Naming .....	31
B. Black Women as Uniquely Vulnerable to the Police.....	32
1. Sexual Violence: Frame Signaling .....	33
2. Sexual Violence: Frame Situating .....	35
3. Sexual Violence: Frame Naming.....	37
4. Non-sexual Violence: Frame Signaling.....	38
5. Non-sexual Violence: Frame Situating.....	40
6. Non-sexual Violence: Frame Naming .....	41
V. Conclusion and Discussion.....	43
VI. Appendix A: Website Search Terms .....	52
VII. References .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>



## **I. Introduction**

*“The crisis in Ferguson, Missouri is a watershed moment not only in civil rights, but in reproductive justice as well” (National Organization for Women 118; August 22, 2015).<sup>1</sup>*

Feminist and anti-racist organizing in the United States has often concentrated on single axes of oppression: gender and race, respectively (Crenshaw 1991). Yet intersectionality — which poses that such systems of oppression interact, and therefore cannot be understood alone (Crenshaw 1989) — is increasingly invoked not only in academic work but in a broad range of activist spaces. On the Black Lives Matter (BLM) website and in interviews, for instance, movement leaders have framed the movement as intersectional. More specifically, they have tied it to reproductive justice (RJ), whose advocates argue that racial and gender oppression are linked and shape women’s reproductive needs. SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective (SisterSong) further describes RJ as “an intersectional theoretical analysis defined by the human rights framework applicable to everyone, and based on concepts of intersectionality and the practice of self-help” (Ross 2006). Making the connection between RJ and Black Lives Matter, BLM co-founder Alicia Garza states,

reproductive justice is very much situated within the Black Lives Matter movement... it’s not just about the right for women to be able to determine when and how and where they want to start families, but it is also very much about our right to be able to raise families, to be able to raise children to become adults.... And that is being hindered by state violence in many different forms. One form being violence by law enforcement or other state forces, and the other form of crisis through poverty and lack of access to resources and lack of access to healthy communities that are safe and sustainable. (Rankin 2016)

---

<sup>1</sup> In quotation citations, the numbers following organization names indicate the document number in Atlas.ti.

Historically, reproductive rights and feminist organizations have often struggled to act upon this kind of intersectional framing (Crenshaw 1989) of reproductive issues, either lacking awareness of intersectional analysis or failing to incorporate it into their core work. They frequently have emphasized birth control and the right to choose abortion over more intersectional reproductive justice concerns raised by women of color (Crenshaw 1989; Roberts 1997; Solinger 2001; Flavin 2009; Richie, Davis, and Traylor 2012). In the midst of complicated relationships among gender justice social movement organizations (Richie 2000; Roth 2004; Silliman et al. 2004; Breines 2006), RJ advocates have often worked to educate other feminist and women's organizations about reproductive justice and intersectionality more broadly (see, e.g., Luna 2010). This has included framing issues not typically considered core feminist or reproductive rights concerns as relevant to well established national organizations' work. This study considers one possible effect of such framing on how Black Lives Matter and racialized police violence are understood.

Black Lives Matter<sup>2</sup> was sparked by the 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin, and protests state violence against Black bodies. From these roots, through large demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri protesting the killing of Michael Brown, to a sustained presence in the streets of other cities and in national headlines, BLM brought racialized state violence to the forefront of national conversations. To date, much of the research on Black Lives Matter has focused on the role Twitter and other social media play, studying movement mobilization and consciousness-raising (Bonilla and Rosa 2015;

---

<sup>2</sup> I rely here on a broad conception of BLM, including the official organization (its national leadership, local chapters, and members), the series of demonstrations that in 2013 began to protest racialized police violence toward Black people in the United States, and broad-based participation on social media by protesters and BLM chapter members alongside people not active in protests or BLM chapters (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). This conception includes Ferguson demonstrations (though see Rios [2016] for important distinctions between Ferguson and BLM).

Carney 2016; Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark 2016; Jackson and Welles 2016). Other work has documented BLM's shift from historical moment to lasting movement (Rickford 2016; Taylor 2016), examined its membership demographics (Olteanu, Weber and Gatica-Perez 2016), or looked at the role of white movement activists (Thurber, Fenelon and Roberts 2015).

Other work has focused on connections between BLM and other social movements, including their emphasis on intersectionality (Pellow 2016) and the role of gender, feminisms, and reproduction in the movement. Some writers argue that BLM has drawn new attention to state violence against Black women and trans\* or gender nonconforming people (Chatelain and Asoka 2015; Hutchinson 2015; Lindsey 2015), while others emphasize that Black and queer women have been at the forefront of the protests in Ferguson. Their leadership, and the rejection of heteronormativity it represents, is a critical component of Ferguson's (and BLM's) political presence (Rios 2016). Several articles stress the important relationship between racial justice and gender justice movements, historically and today (Cohen and Jackson 2016; Roediger 2016), and pointedly question why national and influential feminist organizations have been relatively quiet in the struggle for Black lives (Hutchinson 2015). Of direct relevance here, some scholars have specifically noted that BLM includes reproductive justice as a key issue (Chatelain and Asoka 2015; Hutchinson 2016). At the time of this writing, there have been no empirical studies of the relationship between Black Lives Matter and mainstream national reproductive rights or feminist organizations.

This study explores how four longstanding and prominent national feminist and reproductive rights organizations understand and portray BLM and racialized police

violence. Specifically, I use social movement frame analysis to ask if and how publications on the websites of Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), NARAL Pro-Choice America (NARAL), National Organization for Women (NOW), and Planned Parenthood Federation of America (Planned Parenthood) frame BLM, and the racialized police violence to which it responds, as relevant or irrelevant to the organizations' missions and goals (the "relevance frame").<sup>3</sup> **The analysis finds that three of these "big four" reproductive rights and feminist organizations — Feminist Majority Foundation, National Organization for Women, and NARAL — describe racialized police violence as a reproductive justice concern to support the relevance frame.** The fourth, Planned Parenthood, did not publish any documents that fit the study parameters on their website during the time period under study.

In my data, the relevance frame is premised on the often-implicit argument that reproductive justice is relevant to, or is part of, the work of the organizations I analyze. It further relies on the argument that racialized police brutality is an issue of reproductive justice. This study focuses on the second argument. The analysis demonstrates that the organizations in question build this argument using three discursive maneuvers I argue are best understood as types of frame articulation (Benford and Snow 2000): *frame signaling* (using language that implies the relevance frame, without contextualizing or directly stating it), *frame situating* (explaining the historical and structural context that renders the frame legible, without directly stating it), and *frame naming* (directly stating the frame).

These types of frame articulation are used to indicate three specific ways the organizations understand racialized police violence to be a matter of reproductive justice:

---

<sup>3</sup> This study concentrates on the organizations' national websites. It is beyond the scope of the study to evaluate local or statewide chapters of the organizations, or to determine what actions the organizations take offline.

state violence violates Black parents' right to raise their children to adulthood safely, police officers disproportionately perpetrate sexual violence on Black women, and non-sexual police brutality is directed not only at Black men but also at Black women.<sup>4</sup> Even before BLM leaders publicly announced the movement's connection to RJ early in 2016, the organizations examined here had cast racialized police violence as an RJ concern for these reasons. Although it is possible the various organizations arrived at this interpretation independently, the confluence may also be the result of connections among BLM, RJ organizations, other women of color-led organizing, and mainstream reproductive rights and feminist organizations.

Prior research analyzes how the "big four" feminist or reproductive rights organizations negotiate or amplify the RJ frame when RJ organizations deploy it in coalition work (Luna 2010). In the framing of police violence as an RJ issue by BLM, a movement primarily associated with racial justice, I find the opportunity to build on our understanding of how these organizations validate or contest intersectional analyses broadly and the RJ frame specifically.

## **II. Literature Review**

Social movement, critical race, and Black feminist theory shed light on mainstream reproductive rights and feminist organizations' framing of Black Lives Matter and racialized police violence as relevant to their work. In this section, I briefly review this theoretical nexus, alongside the empirical literature on feminist and RJ movements' relationships with one another. This research contextualizes the study's primary finding: mainstream

---

<sup>4</sup> #SayHerName has been a leader in raising the second and third of these points.

reproductive rights and feminist organizations frame BLM and racialized police violence as relevant to their work.

### ***A. Social Movement Theory: Race and Framing***

Social movement scholarship in sociology was developed through the study of 1960s and 1970s Black mobilizations. Despite this origin, it has frequently used a distinctly white racial frame (Feagin 2010; Bracey 2016). It has often failed to theorize race as a critical component of social movements, neglected the study of Black social movements, and declined to apply a critical race or intersectional lens (Bell 2016; Bracey 2016; but see Robnett 1997, Kim 2003, and Breines 2006 for a few counter-examples).<sup>5</sup> Bracey (2016) argues that such omissions create methodological problems, damaging the credibility of the scholarship produced. These limitations include poor applicability to non-Western states, damage to the integrity of political opportunity and other key ideas, and a problematic assessment of the success of movements. To rectify these failings, recent scholarship has called for studies of social movements to focus on relational power dynamics (see, e.g., Snow, Benford, McCammon, Hewitt, and Fitzgerald 2014), center race, focus on Black social movements, and apply a critical race lens (Bell 2016; Bracey 2016).<sup>6</sup> This study responds to these calls.

*Social movement frames*, or the ideological devices individuals and collectives use to make sense of the world and to justify their actions (Snow, Rochford, Jr., Worden, and Benford 1986; Benford and Snow 2000), are a central organizing concept in the data analyzed here. BLM has framed itself as encompassing reproductive justice; other

---

<sup>5</sup> While my focus here is on race, this era of social movement scholarship has also been criticized for its gender-blindness (see, e.g., Taylor [1999]).

<sup>6</sup> See Zuberi (2011) for a description of the connections between critical race theory and sociology.

organizations have amplified or contested that frame. In this study, I consider how FMF, NARAL, and NOW rely on an understanding of racialized police violence as a reproductive justice concern to frame the violence as relevant to their work.

Movement actors develop frames through an interpretive and often contested process. Frames are negotiated and developed in conversation with various actors and organizations, including through contestation both within and from outside the movement, and in several component parts. Through one of these components, *diagnostic framing*, movement leaders and participants characterize the situation with which they are concerned, and identify a person, group, or institution they consider responsible for their grievances (Snow and Soule 2010). This process may be prompted by an event that changes the landscape in which the social movement develops, or by a shift in popular interpretation — or increased awareness — of an unchanged situation (Snow and Soule 2010). The drastic increase in media coverage of police brutality following BLM’s rise is one such shift.

I analyze *frame articulation*, one of the discursive processes in diagnostic framing. Benford and Snow (2000) write that frame articulation is the “connection and alignment of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and compelling fashion” (623). Despite a large body of research on social movement framing, relatively little is known about frame articulation (Snow 2013). This study helps fill this gap, revealing three types of frame articulation through which the organizations I study delineate their understanding of Black Lives Matter and racialized police violence as matters of reproductive justice.

As theorized by Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986), social movement actors also *align* framed grievances with broader or more popular cultural frames to draw a larger

body of support for the movement. This theory of alignment is most useful for understanding movements that aim for respectability within such popular frames. Other movements, arguably including BLM, aim for respect on their own terms; they seek to align with a select few frames that reflect their values rather than with the broadest or most generally accepted frames. BLM may have aligned its grievances with others, including with the focus on Black parenting in reproductive justice, though it is outside the scope of this study to determine if this is the case. My data show that BLM's framing of itself as reproductive justice and the perspective of the mainstream organizations I analyze here are well aligned.

Social movement leaders have only limited control over the frames they articulate and align, and over their reception by a broader audience. Members of movements, opponents, bystanders, the media, or current events may validate or challenge movement frames generated by leaders. Challenges may be internal or external: any given frame is almost certainly the result of struggles as well as collaboration in the movement that produced it (Benford and Snow 2000). This tension can be productive and generative, creating frames that resonate deeply. For example, #SayHerName and other groups have worked within and outside Black Lives Matter to shift the focus from Black men's experiences of police violence to the experiences of Black women and communities more broadly. This study's findings reflect the success of that work.

### ***B. Critical Race Theory and Critical White Studies***

This study builds on the work of critical race theorists and scholars of critical white studies (e.g., Morrison 1992; Frankenberg 1993; Harris 1993; Lipsitz 1998) who argue that whiteness is unmarked, normalized, and invisible in the United States. As Zuberi (2011)



notes, social science has long defined the “marked” as deviant and inferior (1576). These definitions concentrate research about race and racism on communities of color, to the exclusion of critically analyzing white perpetration of racism. Critical race theory and critical white studies argue for marking whiteness and considering it a possible object of research and analysis. This study is part of a growing body of work that attempts to do so, turning the analytic lens on organizations historically led by white women and influenced by the white racial frame (Feagin 2010).

Scholars in critical race theory and critical white studies generally agree that racism is common; is perpetrated at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels; serves important functions, including returning material benefits to white people; and is based on socially constructed, rather than biological, racial categories (Harris 1993; Lipsitz 1998; Feagin 2010; Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2014). Bonilla-Silva (2014) writes that white people in the United States rarely identify as racist, describing themselves as colorblind despite contributing to and benefitting from racism and white supremacy. Joe Feagin (2010) offers a possible explanation, positing that white Americans fail to understand the racial reality because of their “white racial frame” — a set of racial stereotypes, narratives, emotions, and actions. Proponents of the white racial frame construct racism as an individual problem always perpetrated by other white people, and as a deviation from the norm in an otherwise healthy system.

The white racial frame is useful to this study in three ways. First, in addition to the more explicit manifestations described above, the frame often operates implicitly in the background of conversations, interactions, and structures. Those influenced by the frame may, for example, implicitly center a white subject or construct “women” and “people of

color” as mutually exclusive groups. These two examples arise in my data specifically. Second, this concept is useful in this study as a backdrop to the data: despite what have generally been good intentions, the white racial frame is in evidence in these organizations’ historical and to some extent current work. Finally, Black Lives Matter — and in some cases the organizations studied here — present an alternative to the white racial framing of Black individuals, families, and communities, as well as of policing and criminalization.

### ***C. Black Feminist Theory: Intersectionality and Reproductive Justice***

In the late 1980s, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) built on prior Black feminist work<sup>7</sup> to theorize and name intersectionality, a theory that has since been developed further by Crenshaw and others. Patricia Hill Collins (2015) writes that intersectional analysis, in which women of color have been engaged for generations, can be considered a field of study, an analytic strategy, or a critical praxis. Collins argues that “intersectional knowledge projects” (14) are guided by the assumption that different identities must be understood in relation to one another and as shaping intersecting power systems, which generate “fundamentally unjust” (14) social inequalities and different lived experiences for different people. Intersectionality is central to the data and analyses in this study: the interaction of axes of identity and oppression shapes both the production and my discussion of racialized police violence, reproduction and reproductive justice, and social movements. Further, it is directly or indirectly invoked by Feminist Majority Foundation, NARAL, and NOW in their framing of police violence as a reproductive justice concern; RJ itself, as a framework, rests on intersectional analysis of systems of oppression.

---

<sup>7</sup> For overviews of Black feminist work and history, see Collins (2000) and Springer (2005).

Intersectionality is, more broadly, critical to understanding scholarship on women's social movements, including women of color feminism and womanism. Crenshaw (1989; 1991) illuminates the failure of traditional feminist organizing to account for the experiences of people who are marginalized as women, as immigrants, and as people of color. These experiences, she writes, cannot be divided into those based on race and those based on gender. Rather, women of color occupy a space at the intersection of these two identities (along with others, such as class, immigration status, and languages spoken), a qualitatively different space from that occupied by white women or by men of color.<sup>8</sup> Of key importance here, for instance, white people and institutions often perceive Black women — particularly those in private spaces or with mental health issues — as angry and irrational. Many police killings of Black women turn on this interpretation, which is distinct from how white women or Black men are viewed.

Among other applications, intersectionality is a lens through which to view issues of reproduction. Reproductive justice advocates consider women's locations at the intersection of multiple kinds of oppression, and understand state, organizational, and individual control of the bodies of women of color as a means to control women and communities of color both. Further, they treat race, class, gender, age, ability, sexuality, and immigration status as analytic categories with direct and mutually influential relevance for women's reproductive self-determination (ACRJ 2005) — using intersectionality theory to do so. This study's focus on reproductive justice, and its examination of how an intersectional approach sheds light on issues otherwise seen as one-dimensional, is rooted in the history of reproductive justice organizing and education.

---

<sup>8</sup> See White (1999) for an excellent analysis of intersectional Black feminist framing.

Beginning in the 1970s, Black feminist scholars and members of what would become the reproductive justice movement argued for this intersectional approach to reproduction (Luna and Luker 2013). They advocated an analysis of race, immigration, and class (Beal 1970/2008; Combahee River Collective 1977/1981; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Hull et al. 1982), all systems of oppression they understood to be inextricably linked to reproduction (Ross 2006; Luna and Luker 2013). Women of color coined the phrase “reproductive justice” in 1994, to express this connection between social justice and the struggle for reproductive rights.

Members of the RJ movement born of this history avoids language of “choice” in favor of “access” (Petchesky 1984/1990; Fried 1990) and include in their priorities, according to leading RJ organization SisterSong, a woman’s human right to “Decide if and when she will have a baby and the conditions under which she will give birth; Decide if she will not have a baby and her options for preventing or ending a pregnancy; Parent the children she already has with the necessary social supports in safe environments and healthy communities, and without fear of violence from individuals or the government” (Ross 2006:n.p.). Other organizations, including some of SisterSong’s organizational members, define it more broadly: Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, for instance, describes RJ as “the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, economic, and social well-being of women and girls” (ACRJ 2005). Such breadth expresses the impossibility of understanding one element of a woman’s lived experience without understanding the others. Further, it rests on the knowledge that equity cannot be attained simply through legally identical treatment of all subjects, and acknowledges that differently situated people have different needs. In this

way, the RJ movement addresses barriers faced often by marginalized women but rarely by upper middle class, white, straight, cisgender women.

Reproductive justice is connected to but distinct from reproductive health and rights: members of the RJ movement rely on human rights and justice frameworks, and emphasize intersecting oppressions as discussed above. Its advocates demands more from the government than women's healthcare services (the focus of reproductive health) or privacy in reproductive decision-making (the foundation of the reproductive rights movement for legal abortion), noting that mistaking privacy for sufficient reproductive self-determination "assumes access to resources and... autonomy" (Luna and Luker 2013: 329). Moreover, focusing on privacy leads the reproductive rights movement to seek negative rights rather than positive ones. This includes emphasizing the right to freedom from government interference with a woman's abortion over the right to an abortion itself, the latter of which implies government responsibility for ensuring women can access such care through affordable, safe, and dignified means. Together, reproductive health, rights, and justice form a "complementary and comprehensive solution" to the problem of "reproductive oppression" (ACRJ 2005:1).

In the decades since the phrase debuted on the national stage, RJ activists have worked to educate mainstream reproductive rights and reproductive health organizations about the broader context of reproduction, including the links between various matrices of oppression (Richie 2000; Luna 2010). Black Lives Matter has drawn on key tenets of RJ to characterize itself as encompassing RJ goals, forging a public partnership with RJ organizations (Rankin 2016). Many reproductive rights and feminist organizations, further, have come to include

language in support of RJ in their work (Luna and Luker 2013). This adoption is reflected in my data.

Empirical work has drawn on Black feminist and intersectional theory, and concepts from the RJ movement, to delve into the historical and contemporary racialization of reproduction, reproductive (in)justice, and the concerns women raise about both of the above. Scholars trace the history of government efforts to control working class women of color's fertility through forced or coerced medical procedures, social and legal programs, and the criminalization of Black parenting (Roberts 1997; Solinger 2001; Roberts 2002; Flavin 2009). Specifically, birth control and sterilization have been used as weapons against women of color, as the state — and in some cases white-led reproductive health organizations — divide those they consider fit to reproduce from those they consider unfit (Roberts 1997).

These restrictions on who may (or can) parent hint at the broader construction of parenthood as a right not guaranteed to women of color or working class white women (Coontz 1992; Roberts 1997; Solinger 2001; Roberts 2002; Tapia 2011). Specifically, state interference in Black family formation is foundational to U.S. white supremacy: white people deliberately separated family members who were (legally or effectively) enslaved to interrupt kinship ties through the nineteenth century (Gutman 1976), forcibly sterilized girls and women considered unfit to parent — disproportionately girls and women of color — in the twentieth century (Flavin 2009), and to this day use women's involvement with the legal or welfare systems to coerce their use of long-acting birth control, which reduces women's agency to stop treatment (Roberts 1997; Solinger 2001; Flavin 2009). These and other policies, alongside the framing of women of color as promiscuous, uncaring mothers who

drain the social welfare system (Solinger 2001; Collins 2004; Flavin 2009), have generated a common understanding of “true” parenthood as reserved for white women, preferably those of means. This has contributed to maternalism as a motivating frame in white, heterosexual, middle class women’s social movements, such as the post-partum depression self-help movement (Taylor 1999), to the exclusion of other movements. Black Lives Matter has directly pushed back against this narrative, as have the parents of those the police kill, by emphasizing the victims as children and their parents as mothers and fathers.

#### ***D. Social Movements for Gender Justice***

A great deal of research has examined how twentieth and twenty-first century movements broadly understood to be feminist interact with one another. While much of this research has attended to feminist or women’s movements or organizations historically, a slice has specifically addressed the racial dynamics and racism in feminist movements of the last twenty years (Roth 2004; Silliman, Fried, Ross, and Gutierrez 2004; Breines 2006; Luna 2010; Richie, Davis, and Traylor 2012; Luna and Luker 2013). My analysis is situated in this tradition of studying how feminist organizations and groups contend with race, racism, and calls for intersectional organizing.<sup>9</sup>

Studies show considerable tension among 1960s and 1970s feminist movements, including among organizations led by white women and those led by women of color. Despite the common ground shared by women and organizations in these studies, including frequent self-identification as feminists across racial groups and some collaboration on

---

<sup>9</sup> Painting this history in broad strokes, as I do here, omits important counter-examples. See Hemmings (2011) and Thompson (2002) for a discussion of the complexity and problems in how we tell feminist (hi)stories, and Reger (2012) for further information on the ramifications of those counter-examples — and of the difficulty in forming a neat narrative about feminist history — for today’s feminists.

mutual priorities, organizing together did not always follow (Richie 2000; Roth 2004; Breines 2006). While white women's overt or subtle racism was responsible for some of this tension, a large portion of it can be traced to broader institutional and epistemological frameworks that privileged whiteness and supported racism. This white racial frame (Feagin 2010) frequently led white women to focus on gender to the detriment of their focus on race; feminists of color often prioritized racism alongside sexism, working at times with and at times independently of white women.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many white feminists emphasized the right to delay or avoid reproduction through abortion and birth control, and developed feminist organizations partly as an alternative to male-centric progressive social movement organizations (Richie 2000; Roth 2004). In addition to organizing with men of color and white women, women of color in the same time period often developed independent social movement organizations (Roth 2004; Silliman et al. 2004) that honored their identities and struggles both as women and as people of color. These movements frequently preserved ties with anti-racist organizations led by men, with whom African American and Latina women fought for racial and economic justice before, while, and after developing women-centered movements (Roth 2004; Silliman et al. 2004), and generally focused on a broader array of intersectional concerns (Roberts 1997; Flavin 2009; Richie, Davis, and Traylor 2012). These concerns included economic justice, immigration justice, and access to culturally appropriate and medically sufficient health care (Silliman et al. 2004). Women of color often emphasized the right to become pregnant, the right to a healthy pregnancy and delivery, and the right to raise their children without fear of or interference from state violence (forerunners of RJ goals) alongside the right to prevent or delay pregnancy or childbirth. They also developed



sophisticated analyses of the intersecting injustices they faced, largely precluding one-dimensional movement goals. Some white women similarly viewed (hetero)patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism as intertwined, and joined them in multiracial (often militant) organizing (Thompson 2002).

A series of studies has documented how race and racism operated within and among feminist social movement organizations in the 1980s and 1990s (see, e.g., Poster 1995; Scott 1998; Ostrander 1999; Scott 2000), a period with substantial multiracial feminist activity despite its common framing as a women's movement lull (Thompson 2002). This research shows that white women and women of color often defined the goals of feminist organizations very differently. Many white women centered gender and only secondarily considered race, while women of color often sought and created spaces, organizations, and partnerships in which they did not have to choose between the two. In some multiracial organizations that attended to the intersection of patriarchy and white supremacy, moreover, white women and women of color defined racism differently — as individual and structural, respectively (Scott 2000). While working relationships did develop between organizations led by white women and those led by women of color, or among white women and women of color within organizations, the difference between their definitions and goals at times prevented longer-term collaboration.

More recent studies reveal that feminist ideals and activism are alive and well, including among young people (Reger 2005; Crossley 2017), diffused into the cultural backdrop (Reger 2012), and in organized groups. Research documents complex and sometimes-contradictory organizational priorities, media-generated publicity, and membership practices among today's feminist organizations (Barakso 2004; Barakso and Schaffner 2006). For

instance, despite a commitment to racial and economic justice from national feminist organizations such as National Organization for Women, media focus on the organizations' more "mainstream" work minimizes public knowledge of that commitment (Reger 2002). Other studies show that the success of feminist movements in standing against racism and classism varies by community (Reger 2012).

Some research, directly relevant to this study, focuses on frame negotiation among feminist movements or movement branches relating to reproductive rights, health, and justice (Smith 2005; Luna 2009; Luna 2010; Luna and Luker 2013). Andrea Smith (2005), for instance, argues that the "pro-choice versus pro-life" frame often used to discuss reproductive healthcare artificially concentrates the field of discussion on abortion, only one issue among many reproductive concerns. Perhaps even more concerning, this opposition frames abortion access as a matter of choice, narrowing a conversation that should rightfully include financial support, transportation, childcare, and policy support for professional leave to have an abortion. Further, as Solinger (2001) writes, it frames poor white women and most women of color as not fit to reproduce because they are unable to exercise this "choice" due to other constraints. Smith (2005) adds that, to be effective for women of color and working class white women, twenty-first century movements organizing around reproduction cannot rely on or even expand the pro-choice frame. They must generate paradigms that include RJ's anti-capitalist and anti-criminalization planks, see abortion access as broader than the absence of government interference, and understand reproduction as broader than abortion.

Most closely related to this study, Luna (2009; 2010) has studied how the tension between white feminists' emphasis on the right to choose an abortion and feminists of

color's focus on reproductive justice and reproduction more broadly has affected social movement coalitions. Writing about the 2004 March for Women's Lives, Luna (2010) describes frame contestation between the mainstream reproductive rights organizations that began organizing for the March and the women of color-led organizations that joined the process. The mainstream organizations, focused mostly on reproductive healthcare, had characterized the March as demonstrating for access to abortion. The women of color-led organizations successfully argued for broadening the focus to include other pressing issues for their communities — ultimately changing the name from the Save Women's Lives March for Freedom of Choice to the March for Women's Lives. This reframing linked the March, and reproduction, to a broader spectrum of human rights (Luna 2009). Based on data gathered a decade later, my research examines how the same mainstream organizations studied by Luna have or have not carried this intersectional view of reproduction into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

### **III. Methodology**

This study is based on qualitative analysis of seventy documents published online by Feminist Majority Foundation, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and National Organization for Women. I elected to focus on these organizations — along with Planned Parenthood Federation of America, which was excluded from the final study as discussed below — because, based on their history, size, and influence, reproductive justice advocates often designate them a group apart from other entities that organize around reproduction (see, e.g., Bittenwieser 2005).<sup>10</sup> Further, these “big four” organizations have been at the forefront of

---

<sup>10</sup> I note that although these four are frequently described as “reproductive rights” organizations, FMF and NOW in fact focus more broadly on a wide range of feminist priorities.

debates about reproduction in the United States in the twenty-first century, influencing the national conversation; together, they represent a large portion of national reproductive rights and feminist organizing. Finally, they were the four mainstream organizations in Luna's (2010) study of coalition building around the reproductive justice frame in the 2004 March for Women's Lives. Roughly ten years after the March, this project provides the opportunity to observe how the mainstream organizations in question do or do not continue to use a reproductive justice lens.

To gather the data analyzed here, I developed a list of search terms focused on Black Lives Matter, #SayHerName, and some prominent mobilizations against racialized police violence between 2012 and 2016 (see Appendix A).<sup>11</sup> In June 2016, searching for these terms in the homepage search engines of the primary website of each organization in the study<sup>12</sup> yielded roughly one hundred thirty documents, ranging from informal blog posts authored by interns to press statements by executive directors.<sup>13</sup> I copied all documents into Microsoft Word, and uploaded the files into the qualitative coding software Atlas.ti.<sup>14</sup>

Using Atlas.ti, I conducted one round of line-by-line open coding for initial themes in the documents. I was guided by a set of sensitizing concepts, as discussed by Charmaz (2006), including some prior experience with Black Lives Matter and #SayHerName, interest in the relationship between the organization writing the article and racialized police

---

<sup>11</sup> Though not exhaustive, the list of chosen terms identifies a number of recent prominent cases of racialized police brutality. During data collection, some important terms not previously identified became apparent and were added.

<sup>12</sup> If applicable, I did the same for the organizations' blog search engine.

<sup>13</sup> As discussed further below, I treated all publications as representative of the organization.

<sup>14</sup> Although it would have been preferable to enter the Webpages themselves into Atlas.ti, the software limited this option. Because some original formatting may have been lost in this process, I did not code for formatting.

violence and the movements that protest it, and knowledge of the history of reproductive justice organizing. These sensitizing concepts led me to notice characterizations of police brutality (e.g., “violent, reckless action” [FMF 46; June 10, 2015]), descriptions of Black Lives Matter or #SayHerName and their goals (e.g., “The movement affirms black contributions to society, humanity, and the resilience the black community has shown in the face of oppression” [NARAL 70; February 25, 2015]), understandings of the organization’s mission (e.g., “achieving an inclusive government that works for justice and equality for all of us” [NOW 98; August 14, 2014]), that organization’s relationship to BLM or racial justice (e.g., “NARAL Pro-Choice America is committed to be steadfast allies to this movement” [NARAL 73; July 25, 2015]), mentions of reproductive justice, and any connection drawn between BLM and reproduction or RJ (e.g., “the senseless killing of Michael Brown is a reproductive justice issue” [NOW 118; August 22, 2014]).

**TABLE 1: Documents by Organization and Date Published**

Organization	Time Period	1 (n=6)	2 (n=62)	3 (n=2)	% of total (approx.)
Feminist Majority Foundation (n=48)		2	46	0	69%
National Organization for Women (n=21)		4	16	1	30%
NARAL Pro-Choice (n=1)		0	0	1	1%
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (n=0)		0	0	0	0%
Total documents (n= 70)		6	62	2	100%

N=70

**Time periods:**

1 = earliest publication through August 9, 2014

2 = August 9, 2014 through February 9, 2016

3 = February 9, 2016 through June 26, 2016

After initial coding, I selected the seventy documents that were credited to the organization or its personnel and that directly focused, for at least part of the document, on police/neighborhood watch violence toward Black people or movements protesting that violence.

These criteria excluded documents that served primarily to link readers to another organization's news article and many documents that mentioned an aspect of the topic under study but principally focused on another topic. Of the remaining documents, 69 percent were published by FMF, 30 percent by NOW, and one percent by NARAL. Planned Parenthood's website did not contain any documents that fit the selection criteria.<sup>15,16</sup>

Using a revised list of codes after the first round of coding, I recoded the material guided by a secondary set of research questions that corresponded to themes identified while refining the code list: How does the organization frame BLM and its goals, police violence, and the organization's own work? How and why does it see BLM or racialized police violence as relevant to the organization's work? How is the relationship described? Does it connect BLM to RJ, and if so, what basis does it give for the connection? Does, or how does, the organization emphasize mothering, parenting, or the youth of the victims?

Using material published online removes some methodological research concerns, including confidentiality and lapses in the researcher's memory. However, it raises others:

---

<sup>15</sup> This distribution may reflect the respective organizations' strategic use of their websites. They use websites as a platform for news coverage and opinion pieces to varying extents; NOW and FMF publish at least several times a week, NARAL less than that, and Planned Parenthood rarely.

<sup>16</sup> To evaluate the possible change over time, I also divided the data into three time periods (see Table 1). These periods were divided by two turning points in the history of BLM and reproductive justice. The first period has an open start date and ends with a Ferguson, Missouri police officer's killing of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014. The second runs from Michael Brown's death to a February 9, 2016 joint interview by Black Lives Matter founders and several reproductive justice organizations (including SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, the Trust Black Women Partnership, and New Voices for Reproductive Justice), announcing their formal organizational alliance based on shared struggle. This interview explicitly and publicly named BLM as encompassing RJ goals. The third time period extends from that interview through data collection, which began June 26, 2016. I did not find a noteworthy change over time.

documents may be edited after the listed publication date without indicating the change, rendering the listed date unreliable; the data are only a partial collection of the material put forward by the organizations and do not include social media posts, other publications, or the organization's programming or other work; technical errors in the organizations' websites may affect search results; and the list of search terms used was not exhaustive, and may have failed to return all relevant documents in the search process. Further, obtaining previously published material prohibits analysis of the backdrop or the result of that publication, including any intra-organizational conflict or member response. Moreover, one organization under study, Planned Parenthood, did not publish any documents that fit the search criteria, ensuring the organization's views of the topics under study are represented only in their absence.

Finally, my decision to treat all publications on the organizations' websites as representative of the position of the organization, including those articles that credited an individual staff person or intern, comes with drawbacks. I did not code the organizational role of the listed author, despite the fact that distinctions between individual authors are important: for instance, many of the articles analyzed here were credited to a Black staff member. This assignment may come with positive outcomes and in some cases is clearly a point of passion for the staff member, but may also result in the ghettoization of writing about racialized violence. Because of the methods used here, I cannot evaluate this aspect of the data. Yet despite these concerns, the material included represents a substantial portion of the online conversation unfolding among — and the meaning made by — mainstream reproductive rights and feminist organizations about BLM and racialized police brutality.

One further methodological concern merits mention here. As McKee (1993), Steinberg (2006), and Gordon (2015) persuasively demonstrate, sociology as a discipline has historically failed to produce critical analyses of racism and white supremacy. Canonical social science methods have frequently relied on the white racial frame (Feagin 2010), and in many studies are imbued with white logic (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). Social scientists have often used these methods to justify and perpetrate racial oppression; far less often have we used them to deconstruct structures of power and domination based on race. In light of this history, I note that our methods make such deconstruction difficult, both practically and theoretically.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, this is my aim here.

#### **IV. Findings**

A decade after RJ organizations pressed the “big four” mainstream reproductive rights and feminist organizations spearheading the March for Women’s Lives to use an RJ frame (Luna 2010), a new national context and a new social movement have emerged. BLM advocates’ use of an intersectional lens to understand racialized police brutality as reproductive justice provides a key opportunity to understand how the organizations studied by Luna do or do not continue to apply the RJ lens. Specifically, I ask if they use that lens to frame BLM and racialized police brutality as relevant to their work, after a decade of intervening efforts by RJ advocates may have laid the groundwork for such an application.

**I argue that some mainstream reproductive rights and feminist organizations have used their understanding of reproductive justice to frame BLM and racialized police violence as relevant to their own work** (the “relevance frame”). This frame rests on the premise that racialized police violence is an issue of reproductive justice issue. The

---

<sup>17</sup> See Audre Lorde (1983) on attempts to use the tools of the system to resist that system.



relevance frame is articulated in my data via three types of frame articulation (Benford and Snow 2000).

First, organizations engage in *frame signaling* when they use language that only indirectly suggests the relevance frame. A knowing audience, primed through prior experience or knowledge to understand how the language used implies the frame, would understand the frame being communicated, but others would not. For instance, some organizations emphasize the childhood of the victims of police violence to indicate the centrality of state interference in Black parenting to this issue. Frame signaling only suggests the articulated frame; it is indirect.

Second, *frame situating* presents historical or structural analysis that contextualizes the frame in question and makes it clear. Here, frame situating might be describing the history of state interference in Black women's reproduction in the United States, before stating that police murder of Black youth must be understood in this context. Although this situating does demonstrate how racialized police violence is a reproductive justice concern, it does not state the relevance frame explicitly. Given this background information, some readers who did not infer that frame from frame signaling will likely understand it.

Finally, *frame naming* is directly stating the frame in question, making it clear to any audience. Unlike the first two, this kind of frame articulation is explicit and easily read even by those with minimal knowledge about the topic. Here, naming the frame may be phrased, for instance, as "Black Lives Matter is a reproductive justice movement." The organizations I analyze use these three kinds of frame articulation to cast three types of racialized police violence as RJ concerns and hence relevant to their work: state interference with Black

parents' right to raise children safely to adulthood, police murder of Black women, and police targeting of Black women for the perpetration of sexual violence.

I base these conclusions on data from FMF, NOW, and NARAL. FMF and NOW explicitly identify the problems discussed above as points of overlap between BLM and RJ. NARAL, in contrast, does not make this argument about parenting or police sexual violence, and makes the argument about police non-sexual violence only implicitly. However, they clearly connect RJ to BLM and emphasize police killing of Black women.

### ***A. Black Parents' Right to Raise Children Safely to Adulthood***

Black Lives Matter has explicitly focused on Black parents' right to raise their children safely to adulthood, a core component of RJ. Reproductive justice movements and organizations have historically prioritized the right to parent alongside the right *not* to parent more frequently emphasized by mainstream reproductive rights or feminist organizations. FMF and NOW frame the violation of this right by the police as an RJ concern and hence, relevant to their work. They *signal* the frame, emphasizing both police victims' youth and "parenting interrupted," particularly mothering. They *situate* the frame, contextualizing the issue in historical and structural information and generating a broader understanding of institutional racism, parenting, and violence. Finally, they *name* the frame, directly stating that racialized police violence is a reproductive justice issue and therefore relevant to their work. Casting racialized police violence as a parenting concern frames it as a feminist issue.

#### **1. Frame Signaling**

FMF and NOW signal the relevance frame by describing racialized police violence as state interference in Black parenting. To make this connection, they emphasize the youth of

the people the police kill and the parents' experiences of their deaths. They construct the victims as children and their parents as mothers and fathers in direct relation to their children. To a reader with the background knowledge necessary to understand Black parenting in the face of state violence as an RJ issue, these constructions would signal that the organizations consider the murders relevant to their work. However, readers without such knowledge might not make the same connection.

First, the organizations signal this frame by emphasizing the youth of those the police kill. In many cases this characterization is embedded in their descriptions of the victims: the characteristics they choose to emphasize, or, in long lists of victim names, the inclusion of ages only for children and teenagers. NOW writes,

The National Organization for Women is shocked and saddened by the tragic death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, the African-American teenager shot and killed while walking home from a convenience store in Sanford, Florida. Unarmed, Trayvon was carrying a bag of candy and an iced tea when he was gunned down near his father's home. (NOW 105; March 23, 2012)

Here, NOW uses Trayvon Martin's age as the first descriptor. Further, they include two pieces of information that paint him as a child: he was carrying candy, a food associated with children, and he was walking in his father's neighborhood. This description serves multiple purposes: it conveys the innocence associated with childishness, it indicates Trayvon had good reason to be present on the street where he was killed, and it focuses the reader's attention on his relationship with his father by suggesting he was staying in his father's home as a dependent. Through these descriptors, NOW portrays Trayvon as a child, drawing on cultural norms of protecting, rather than fearing, children. This is particularly noteworthy because the state generally reserves that protection for white children: Black boys are often interpreted as adult men and as threats.

At times, the organizations emphasized the youth or childishness of the victims by explicitly noting that interpretation. Responding to Cleveland police descriptions of Tamir Rice, who was 12 when an officer killed him in a city park, FMF notes,

Tamir, a sixth-grader, apparently looked like he was 20. Race and gender again collude to undermine our recognition of Tamir as a victim. Instead, this Black male child's murder is not only justified, but further, charged to his own indiscretions, which are all the more provocative because of how we render Black masculinity, no matter what age. (FMF 3; December 3, 2014)

FMF explicitly maps out how Tamir Rice's age, gender, and race contributed to the police reading him as a dangerous adult. Moreover, they highlight what is often the result of that reading: death, and post-mortem blame for that death.

In other cases, the organizations conveyed the victim's youth through the eyes of community members. At a gathering for the National Moment of Silence 2014, event leaders “reiterated that this was not ‘a day of rage,’ but of mourning, prompting one man to shout out, ‘They’re killing our babies!’ during the moment of silence” (FMF 39; August 15, 2014). This quotation casts the victims as not merely children, but infants. It also gestures at the relationship between victim and parents — and, through the use of the word “our” instead of “my,” the broader community.

The second way the organizations signal the relevance frame based on state interruption in Black parenting is by centering the victims’ mothers and fathers, and their mothering and fathering. Often this signaling draws on broader cultural scripts about parenting; at times, it is also a plea for recognition of the individual parents of the victims *as parents*. In a post titled “NOW Calls for Justice in Trayvon Martin Case: Fire the Chief, Arrest the Shooter, and Repeal ‘Stand Your Ground’ Laws,” NOW exemplifies the former:

No mother should have to lose a child, especially to such horrible violence. NOW will continue to work with allied organizations to change police practices,

politically-motivated laws and social attitudes that put too many African-American teens at risk for the “crime” of walking while young and black. (NOW 105; March 23, 2012)

This quotation briefly turns the focus away from Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman and onto Mr. Martin’s mother, Sybrina Fulton, and connects her experience to the experiences of other mothers of many races. It calls attention to the commonality in the experience of mothering, and places NOW in collaboration with other organizations in their attempts to prevent those mothers from experiencing what Ms. Fulton did.

Other publications quoted mothers or fathers of the victims directly, holding a microphone to their voices and experiences. FMF cited Ms. Fulton as stating,

If they refuse to hear us, we will make them feel us. Some will mistake that last statement as being negatively provocative. But feeling us means feeling our pain; *imagining our plight as parents of slain children*. We will no longer be ignored. We will bond, continue our fights for justice, and make them remember our children in an appropriate light. (FMF 63; August 19, 2014; emphasis added)

Ms. Fulton here casts herself and other parents of victims of police brutality primarily as parents. She indicates that this is the broader frame with which she identifies — and with which others should identify her — and steps into the culturally familiar role of protective mother in her promise to do justice to the memory of her son.

## 2. Frame Situating

In other writings the organizations situate the relevance frame, providing historical information and structural analysis to contextualize Black parenting in the face of state violence in centuries of such violence. They explicitly reference the various systems of oppression that come together to generate that context, and describe mechanisms that produce it. Specifically, they emphasize the effect of those systems and mechanisms on

parenting, and the connection between police brutality and state interference in Black parenting. In context, audiences who did not understand the frame signals discussed in the previous section may grasp the relevance frame. However, the organizations do not directly name the frame.

In a piece calling feminists to join the “fight in Ferguson,” quoted here at length, FMF describes the historical context of contemporary state violence against Black children and youth:

Beyond slavery, we, as Americans, have an unfortunately rich rhetorical and cultural history of rendering Black women in the popular imagination as hypersexual, sexless, and/or emasculating beings, with little complexity beyond those strictures. Thanks to the collusion of racism, sexism, and classism, these unwarranted tropes even steer national policy, and serve as the subtext of laws that regulate the wombs of women of color. But Black and Brown women parent despite the *affronts on their single parenting* (think: Moynihan); despite the *affronts on their parenting in the face of relationship violence outside of their home country* (think: Congressional resistance to expand the 2013 provisions of the Violence Against Women Act); despite the *affronts on their parenting while poor* (think: “welfare queens”). For these reasons, especially, it’s unthinkable that we would further encumber the parenting experiences of people of color. *No parent should have their right to parent — their choice to parent — arbitrarily and unexpectedly interrupted or terminated because of state violence* — violence that is all too often driven by the very same racist/sexist/Other-ist norms erected in the American subconscious. Lesley McSpadden and Michael Brown, Sr. did not deserve that. (FMF 3; December 3, 2014; emphasis added)

FMF uses background information to argue that state interference in Black (and brown) parenting is particularly reprehensible, and to situate the frame of racialized police violence as relevant to FMF’s work in the context that explains why. After discussing the history of enslavement and state pathologizing of Black motherhood in a piece titled, “What Does the Crisis in Ferguson Have to Do With Reproductive Justice?”, NOW reaches a similar conclusion:

And now in the 21st century, children are STILL being taken from their mothers, only now it’s in the form of treating their teenage and young adult kids like criminals

and locking them up (the school-to-prison pipeline) or outright killing them, like Michael Brown, Renisha McBride, Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, etc. . . . Too many cops and too many white people so fear and distrust young people of color that they shoot to kill, having, in Brittney Cooper's words, "miscalculated the level of threat." The upshot is that African American moms still are not allowed to raise the children they have. (NOW 118; August 22, 2014)

These quotations clearly indicate the view that police killings of young Black people must be positioned in a broader history of state interference with Black parenting. They argue that this history explains why the deaths must be understood, at least in part, as the state refusing Black parents their right to parent. In this frame situating, the organizations do not directly state the relevance frame. That direct communication occurs, instead, in frame naming.

### 3. Frame Naming

In frame naming, the organizations explicitly state that BLM and racialized police brutality are relevant to their work because police violence is state interference with Black parenting. This is the most direct form of frame articulation the organizations undertook in my study; it was frequently paired with motivational or prognostic framing in the form of a call to action for feminists or likeminded others. Frame naming is clearly legible, if not intuitive, even to an entirely uninitiated reader who comes to these postings without prior knowledge about reproductive justice, intersectional feminism, or racialized police violence. In my data, frame naming often involves writing about quotations drawn from other sources.

In a piece called "Activists Connect Shooting of Michael Brown to Movement for Reproductive Justice," FMF discusses an RH Reality Check article by Emma Akpan:

"We cannot tell women of color what issues are important to them," Akpan wrote. "Implying that the grief of losing Trayvon Martin is not a women's issue erases the experience of Black mothers across the United States. Facing stark realities, Black mothers have to raise their sons with mistrust of the police and

constantly remind them how to avoid violence and arrest.” (FMF 6; August 13, 2014)

In amplifying this quotation, FMF supports the view of George Zimmerman’s killing of Trayvon Martin’s as a “women’s issue.” They publish a quotation that connects that view directly to Black mothering, and make clear that the murder is relevant to their work because of this connection. In the same article, FMF writes that Imani Gandy, senior legal analyst at RH Reality Check,

...said she wanted to encourage the entire feminist movement to recognize the situation in Ferguson as inextricably tied to the broader fight for reproductive rights, a fight that includes the right of mothers to parent and bear children... “Black women are raising children and fearing that their children are going to be gunned down in the street. That affects their ability to parent freely,” continued Gandy. (FMF 6; August 13, 2014)

In this article, FMF draws on experts’ opinions to directly state that they view “the situation in Ferguson” as relevant to reproductive rights — and explain that reproductive rights include a key RJ tenet, the right of women to parent children freely. They call on women who support feminism or reproductive rights, pointing to recent deaths, and their interference with Black parenting, as evidence that those women should consider Ferguson relevant to FMF’s work.

### ***B. Black Women as Uniquely Vulnerable to the Police***

Through an intersectional analysis, reproductive justice advocates recognize Black women’s bodies as under particular threat from state violence due to their locations in, and experiences of, historical and contemporary systems of oppression. Some sections of Black Lives Matter, including #SayHerName, have drawn attention to this analysis. They note the police kill not only Black men but Black women, and that they target Black women for



sexual violence. FMF and NOW, and to a lesser extent NARAL, also focus on these aspects of police violence.

In this process, they use the three framing types described above to cast the racialized police (sexual and non-sexual) violence perpetrated against Black women as relevant to their work. They *frame signal*, providing information that implies this frame to an audience with background knowledge through listing women the police have killed or raped, following demands to #SayHerName, and through spare descriptions of how the cases unfolded. This is particularly important in light of the relative absence of media coverage of police violence toward Black women. They also *frame situate*, using an intersectional analysis to contextualize this information in history and broader social structures, emphasizing that Black women experience intersecting systems of oppression. Finally, they *frame name*, explicitly stating that police violence toward Black women is relevant to their work because it is a matter of reproductive injustice.

In discussions of non-sexual violence, frame naming is often in the form of direct calls to feminists; regarding sexual violence, however, these calls are not made explicit. This may be because sexual violence is more generally understood to be a concern for feminist movements than is non-sexual racialized police brutality. Therefore, signaling or situating the relevance frame based on police sexual violence against Black women as a feminist issue may reach a broader audience than the same tactics do for state interference in Black parenting or police non-sexual violence. This may render frame naming about police sexual violence less important.

### 1. Sexual Violence: Frame Signaling

FMF informs or reminds readers that the police target Black women for the perpetration of sexual violence, signaling their broader framing of racialized police violence as relevant to their work. (NOW and NARAL did not frame signal regarding sexual violence.) Although readers with knowledge of intersectional feminism would likely understand from these statements that FMF considers police sexual violence against Black women, and therefore Black Lives Matter, to be relevant to their work, others might not.

In these publications, FMF repeatedly emphasizes that police sexual violence against Black women happens. They note, “There is a pattern and practice of police brutality against people of color in the United States, especially against Black women and men. Let us not forget the 13 Black women who were raped and sexually assaulted by an on-duty Oklahoma City police officer [Daniel Holtzclaw]” (FMF 45; November 24, 2014). They also often highlight that the media rarely cover this pattern: “Police violence against women of color, specifically Black women, often manifests as sexual violence, although sexual assault by police officers is not often considered in public dialogue about police violence” (FMF 58; August 14, 2015).

When frame signaling, FMF also cites advocacy groups and activists. They frequently quote from the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) report “Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women,” and from AAPF founder and executive director Kimberlé Crenshaw. Through these quotations, they explain that such violence is common:

Crenshaw... co-authored a report that was also released last week to coincide with the #SayHerName social movement called ‘#SayHerName: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women.’ The report highlights stories of Black women who have been killed by police, and studies forms of police brutality, such as sexual assault, that are often disproportionately experienced by women. (FMF 2; May 28, 2015)

They laud survivors who testify, without shaming those who do not, and often credit groups on the ground for their work drawing attention to this issue. Regarding the sentencing of former Oklahoma police officer Daniel Holtzclaw, for instance, FMF explains,

Holtzclaw used his position and power to systematically target at least 13 black women for rape and assault. All 13 survivors testified during the trial, a courageous act for women who were predictably shamed, smeared, and disparaged in court. Prior to the verdict, the case received scant attention in the mainstream media. Black women, including the black woman-led activist group OKC Artists for Justice, spearheaded online and on-the-ground organizing to mobilize action around the case. The group attended the trial and verdict, and also held a rally which brought attention to their hashtag, #BlackWomenMatter. (FMF 21; December 11, 2015)

Here, FMF signals that racialized police violence is relevant to their work because it includes police targeting of Black women for the perpetration of sexual violence.

## 2. Sexual Violence: Frame Situating

In their discussion of police sexual violence toward Black women, the organizations considered here situate the relevance frame in contextual information about intersecting systems of oppression. The organizations provide readers with background information regarding how these intersections make police officers particularly likely to target Black women for sexual assault. In describing this context, the organizations guide readers to understanding how reproductive justice, and the organizations' own missions, necessarily encompass work against these atrocities. In discussions of the conviction of former police officer Daniel Holtzclaw, which represent the bulk of their frame situating regarding sexual violence, they discuss the prior interaction of those Holtzclaw targeted with the criminal justice system, Holtzclaw's biography, and the way the survivors were treated in the courtroom. To many readers, this frame situating will make clear why this issue fits neatly inside the organizations' work.

The organizations' frame situating ranged from explicitly identifying the personal and political histories of those involved to emphasizing the emotional effect of structural inequalities on the victims. In an example of the first, NOW writes,

Like so many other predators, Holtzclaw figured he could assault his victims with impunity, calculating that they would not report him for fear they would not be believed. After all, he was a police officer and former football star, while they were not "respectable" because they had used drugs or had some involvement with the criminal justice system. Holtzclaw's conviction on 18 of the 36 counts he was charged with is encouraging, but our society has much more work to do to end rape culture. How and why did he get away with his crimes for so long? We cannot answer that question until we begin to understand the way in which police abuse of authority intersects with gender, race and class. Holtzclaw's defense strategy of re-victimizing the victims by parading their criminal records and past drug use before the jury was part and parcel of rape culture. (NOW 124; December 11, 2015)

Here, NOW emphasizes that Holtzclaw leveraged his professional and social status against the women he victimized. Further, they note that he targeted women who had reason to avoid further interaction with the legal system — in some cases, because they were afraid they would be arrested — and who therefore would be particularly reluctant to report him to the authorities. They then turn to the broader structure of gender, race, and class, and connect Holtzclaw's use of women's criminal records to rape culture. In doing so, NOW contextualizes this case of violence for the reader. Although they do not directly explain the relevance frame, they provide the necessary information for a reader with some understanding of intersectional feminism to grasp it. They do so, in part, through use of particular words and phrases that gesture at broader understandings ("intersects with gender, race and class," "system," "rape culture").

At times, the organizations situate the frame simply by stating the oppression Black women have experienced over generations. FMF writes, "Black women's

bodies are too often the site of state-sponsored violence. Black women are too often ignored and marginalized, and our demand for justice ignored. Let this verdict and this sentencing serve as a catalyst for change” (FMF 22; January 21, 2016). At other times, they portray the violence from the women’s point of view and the stakes the women saw if they reported it. These stakes are clearly related to the power differential between Holtzclaw and the women, providing context to Holtzclaw’s decision to target them, his success in doing so, and the women’s concerns about reporting him. In a description of the case, FMF explains,

During the hearing, all 13 women gave testimony against the police officer, who is alleged to have used his power as an officer to commit these crimes. One woman testified that she was forced to perform sexual acts: “It was either that or the county jail.” Another woman testified, “He was an officer. And I was scared. And I knew he could hurt me.” A 17-year old girl also offered testimony that Holtzclaw, after threatening her with arrest, pulled down her shorts and forced her to have sex with him on the front porch of her mother’s home. “What am I going to do? Call the cops? He was a cop,” she testified. “I was afraid of what could happen to me if I was snitching.” (FMF 43; November 20, 2014)

In addition to emphasizing the victims’ youth, as discussed above, FMF highlights the women’s explanation of why they were concerned about reporting Holtzclaw. This background information gives the reader the knowledge to understand the relevance frame.

### 3. Sexual Violence: Frame Naming

In this category, frame naming directly states the relevance frame through discussion of how officers target Black women for sexual violence. In a piece titled “5 Reasons Feminists Should Join the Fight for Justice in Ferguson,” FMF writes,

The 13 sex assault victims of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, youngest age 17. Cleveland, Ohio 15-year-old, sexually assaulted on video by an officer. Florida 20-year-old raped by a Boynton Beach police officer. This list doesn’t begin to account for the gravity of the problem, but it certainly deserves your energy, your feminist

engagement, and even your outrage. We can't deny it, we can't talk around it. Ferguson is a feminist issue. (FMF 3; December 3, 2014)

Here, FMF — the only organization that frame named in this case — focuses on the Black girls and young women Holtzclaw and other police officers assaulted. They argue the reader should be outraged, *as a feminist*, by these cases. Finally, they directly name the frame of racialized police violence as feminist concern, posing these assaults as relevant to their work and to their (presumably feminist) audience.

Compared to the state's violent interruption of Black parenting and police non-sexual violence toward Black women, police sexual violence toward Black women had the fewest instances of frame naming. I suggest this is because police sexual violence toward Black women is more easily read as relevant to feminist and reproductive rights organizations' work than are police non-sexual violence toward women or police killings of Black children and youth. This would indicate the organizations' assumption that more readers will grasp the relevance of this topic through frame signaling or frame situating, making frame naming less necessary here than when it is based on the other two types of violence.

#### 4. Non-sexual Violence: Frame Signaling

The organizations discussed here use frame signaling about non-sexual police violence toward Black women to position racialized police violence in general, and BLM, as relevant to their work. They accomplish this by reminding readers that the police brutalize women in addition to men, or by listing the names of women of color the police have killed. Although sometimes the lists of women's names are interspersed with men's names, at other times there are no men listed and no explanation of why — subtly suggesting that the women listed are more pertinent than the men not listed, and in that fact marking the violence as

gendered and relevant to the organizations and their readers. Further, these lists directly comply with #SayHerName's demand that the names of female victims of police violence be said. However, without contextual information (frame situating) or a direct stating of the relevance frame (frame naming), less informed readers may not understand that, or how, this violence falls within the organizations' purview.

Expanding on a previous discussion of mothers' experiences of police brutality against their children, NOW cautions, "...But it is wrong to think that police brutality affects women of color only insofar as they are mothers. African American women, as well as men, are directly brutalized by police" (NOW 118; August 22, 2014). #SayHerName has played a central role in expanding the conversation to include this brutalization of women, a fact noted by FMF in a piece about a school police officer assaulting a Black female student:

Women and girls are often at the center of police violence. Since the #SayHerName campaign began, the hashtag has taken off on social media sparking marches, protests, rallies, and vigils across the country. Protests in San Francisco [sic] and New York took place this summer, and were joined by family members of Tanisha Anderson, Rekia Boyd, Miriam Carey, Michelle Cusseux, Shelly Frey, Kayla Moore, and Alberta Spruill, all of whom are Black women killed by police violence. (FMF 44; October 27, 2015)

In this quotation, FMF directly explains why they are listing these women's names: to support #SayHerName, and to emphasize that the police kill Black women, not only Black men.

In other cases, organizations are less clear about why they list women's names. A press release titled "NARAL Stands with Black Lives Matter, #SayHerName, United at Black Lives Convening" declares, "The NARAL Pro-Choice America community sends our love and prayers to the families of Sandra Bland, Kindra Chapman, India Clarke, Rekia Boyd, and countless others whose lives were cut too short by unspeakable brutality and injustices;

this must stop. Black lives matter” (NARAL 73; July 25, 2015). Here, NARAL positions itself alongside BLM and #SayHerName, and says the names of four women murdered by the police. It does not explain why it lists these particular people, providing less frame signaling than does FMF. However, to an informed reader, the list of names indicates NARAL considers women’s deaths at the hands of the police to be relevant to their work partly because they are women.

#### 5. Non-sexual Violence: Frame Situating

When frame situating, the organizations considered here explicitly describe how intersecting systems of oppression both generate police violence toward women of color and obscure their stories from public awareness. This context makes the relevance frame regarding police non-sexual violence toward Black women legible. The reader may be particularly likely to understand the frame in cases that emphasize the role gender plays in producing the violence. Readers of the organizations’ websites are likely more adept at applying feminist analyses than critical race analyses to violence, and therefore may be able to translate direct discussion of how the two relate to an understanding of the relevance of this violence to the organization’s work.

In a discussion of protests in Baltimore following the murder of Freddie Gray, for example, NOW argues, “It is important to recognize that multiple, intersecting forms of oppression are at play, particularly racism, sexism, and transphobia/cissexism. Women of color are frequently killed during police encounters, but we don’t have the same public awareness of their stories. They don’t become household names” (NOW 112; April 30, 2015). Against this backdrop, readers who did not understand the relevance frame when it



was merely signaled may grasp it: the failure of the public to value women and men equally is a central and longstanding feminist concern.

In other cases, organizations quote activists and organizers on the ground who describe the violence and the structural oppressions that generate it. According to FMF,

Dozens of topless protesters stopped traffic in San Francisco last week on the National Day of Action for Black Women and Girls to protest the lack of national attention for black women killed by police brutality... Chinyere Tutashinda, founding member of the BlackOut Collective and a member of the local chapter of Black Lives Matter, explained the significance of protesting topless. “We also understand that we live in a country that commodifies black women and black bodies but ignores the death of black women and black girls.” (FMF 2; May 28, 2015)

This quotation mentions the women’s protest tactics, which reference and reclaim African protest tactics and assert the protestors’ self-identification in the face of viewers’ ascriptions. It then turns to focus on the broader context of a white supremacist capitalist structure that systematically devalues the lives of Black women and girls while profiting off them. FMF’s use of this quotation conveys to readers that the violence being protested must be understood as part of the larger system. This situates the relevance frame for readers who come to FMF’s website without such knowledge.

#### 6. Non-sexual Violence: Frame Naming

Frame naming based on the perpetration of non-sexual racialized police violence on Black women makes the relevance frame explicit. The organizations at times call on feminists by category, and argue directly that they should view this violence as a concern for them *as feminists*. These appeals, unlike frame signaling or frame situating, present the relevance frame clearly and unambiguously and in some cases shift into motivational or prognostic framing, urging their audience to become active on the issue based on the established relevance. They identify the violence police direct at Black women’s bodies as

demanding not merely a race but a gender analysis. This frame naming should be easy to grasp even for readers with little prior knowledge about the organizations or reproductive justice.

In two publications NOW specifically calls on “antiracist feminists of all colors” to respond to police (non-sexual) violence against Black women. Echoing FMF’s characterization of police officers targeting Black women, NOW writes, “State sanctioned violence against Black individuals is an issue for antiracist feminists of all colors. Crucially, we must recognize the degree to which Black women are uniquely targeted by police” (NOW 113; July 16, 2015). In directly naming this targeting as a feminist issue, NOW draws the relevance frame explicitly. Further, they emphasize it as an issue for feminists of many races, clearly including white women. It is noteworthy, however, that they specify the violence is an issue for *antiracist* feminists; using this modifier acknowledges that not all feminists are antiracist, perhaps prompting some readers to disassociate from the call because they do not identify as such.

Tapping into a different set of cultural cues in a piece addressing the “police brutality crisis,” NOW

calls on the Department of Justice to conduct a thorough investigation into how five Black women can die while in custody in just a two-week span... Antiracist feminists of all colors know that, in the words of Dr. King, “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” If we cannot trust the police to treat our Black and brown sisters and brothers with respect and fairness, how can we trust them at all? (NOW 106; July 30, 2015)

Though they again focus their call on “antiracist feminists of all colors,” here NOW seems actually to be primarily addressing white feminists. They emphasize the connection between the oppressions of various peoples, prompting the reader to connect their own struggle to that of women, or men, of color. Because people of color likely do not see this

injustice as being just “anywhere” — which implies it is not close at hand — the target of this call seems to be white feminists. It also suggests that racialized police violence might not seem to be a feminist issue. Finally, the last sentence in this passage clearly addresses white feminists: “If we cannot trust the police to treat our Black and brown sisters and brothers with respect and fairness, how can we trust them at all?” The use of “we” and “our” implies the addressee is not among the “Black and brown sisters and brothers.” Thus, while the first call to “antiracist feminists of all colors” discussed here may truly be addressed to such a broad audience, the second seems not to be. This subtle insertion of the unmarked white subject is evidence of the white racial frame (Feagin 2010).

In these quotations, the organizations directly state the framing of racialized police violence as relevant to their work and their (at times multiracial, at times arguably white) intended audience. Because the frame is directly named, it is likely legible to audiences without prior knowledge about reproductive justice.

## **V. Conclusion and Discussion**

As I have demonstrated, three of the “big four” mainstream reproductive rights and feminist organizations (Feminist Majority Foundation, National Organization for Women, and NARAL Pro-Choice America) frame racialized police violence as relevant to their organizational work in writings published on their websites. These writings focus on three areas in which the relevance frame is especially clear because of the connection between the violence and reproductive justice: state interference with Black parenting, police perpetration of sexual violence on Black women, and police brutality toward and killing of Black women.

This study makes three primary contributions to the sociological literature. First, it builds on social movement theory of framing, delineating three component parts of the relatively understudied process of frame articulation (*frame signaling*, *frame situating*, and *frame naming*), focusing on interpretations of a Black social movement, and attending to powered relationships in those interpretations. Second, it expands our knowledge of how feminist social movement organizations define their priorities and use an intersectional lens to construct reproductive justice concerns as relevant to their work. Third, it contributes to the literature on Black Lives Matter, particularly regarding how the movement is read by external bodies and is developing in a broader context of social movement relations.

The data presented here support the conclusion that reproductive justice tenets continue to resonate in mainstream feminist and reproductive rights spaces ten years after the March for Women's Lives Luna (2010) analyzes. This further constitutes tentative empirical support for anecdotal reports that intersectional lenses are increasingly common in mainstream social movement organizing, and may speak to the work done by reproductive justice and other women-of-color organizing to educate mainstream organizations about such theory, analysis, and organizing.

This study also shows one Black Lives Matter frame that has drawn support from more established social movement organizations: as a movement that encompasses reproductive justice, because it addresses violence against Black children and Black women. While this support may not be a primary — or even a secondary or tertiary — goal of the movement, it is useful to understand which frames are well received and validated by movements that may not at first appear connected to BLM. Further, the study documents one aspect of the social movement landscape at the present moment, revealing connections between BLM and

three social movement organizations. The overlap in framing of racialized police brutality illuminated here raises the possibility of collaborative work around shared priorities.

These findings also contribute to the field's substantive knowledge on three of the "big four" feminist and reproductive rights organizations. They reveal substantial differences in organizational approaches to racialized police brutality and the racialization of reproduction. The two organizations generally identified as "feminist at large" — NOW and FMF — wrote significantly more about police brutality, and more critically approached the racialization of mothering, during the time period studied than did the two organizations more narrowly understood as reproductive rights-focused, Planned Parenthood and NARAL. This may reflect Planned Parenthood's and NARAL's concentration on reproductive health, rather than feminism or reproduction more broadly. Further, NOW and FMF more strongly supported the relevance frame; NARAL did support the frame, but implicitly and in fewer documents and topic areas, while Planned Parenthood did not publish sufficient data to evaluate their support for the relevance frame during the data collection window. NARAL only posted one document primarily focused on Black Lives Matter or racialized police brutality during this time period (see Table 1). In that document, they articulated the relevance frame via references to non-sexual police violence against Black women, but not to Black parenting or police sexual violence.

There were also, however, considerable differences between how FMF and NOW used the relevance frame and discussed the three supporting arguments. They both posted prolifically about Black parenting in the face of state violence and police perpetration of non-sexual violence against Black women. Their quotations about these topics were nearly interchangeable. They each used the three discursive framing tactics I describe, and they

relied on similar imagery and even, in some cases, similar sentence structure. However, FMF wrote far more than did NOW about police sexual violence against Black women. This disparity may reveal a greater interest in covering police sexual violence on the part of FMF; NOW's coverage may reflect the low level of media coverage of such violence in general, even compared to police killing of Black women and children.

Finally, it is important to note Planned Parenthood's silence on Black Lives Matter and racialized police brutality on their website during the time period under study. This silence may indicate a lack of support for the framing of these topics as relevant to their work. However, though a comprehensive catalogue of Planned Parenthood's Twitter and Facebook posts is beyond the scope of this study, an informal review of these accounts reveals they do post on these topics. Further, in such posts they draw on similar supporting arguments as do NARAL, NOW, and FMF in the data presented here. In light of this information, I suggest two possible alternative conclusions; both stem from differences in how the organizations use their websites.

First, Planned Parenthood's silence may reflect the charged political climate in which they operate: to a greater extent than NARAL, NOW, or FMF, they are under attack from other social movement organizations, individuals, and the government. Under these conditions, they may be reluctant to publish long statements on topics not directly related to reproductive health, their primary focus. Their Twitter and Facebook posts on the topic of BLM and racialized police brutality have been subject to intense backlash from the anti-choice movement for their supposed "irony," given Planned Parenthood's support for Black women's access to abortion. In such an environment, they may be less likely to post longer — and easier to quote out of context — articles on Black Lives Matter.

Second, it is instructive to consider that although FMF and NOW posted a great deal on these topics during the time studied, NARAL posted only once. Though that one document strongly supports BLM and deployed the relevance frame, NARAL still posted significantly less than did FMF and NOW. In this study I have clustered FMF, NOW, and NARAL together, as organizations that did post on this topic and as opposed to Planned Parenthood, which did not post. However, a different division could be drawn between NOW and FMF, who posted a great deal, and NARAL and Planned Parenthood, who posted very little or not at all. This division draws a line between the “general feminist” organizations and the reproductive health/rights organizations, and may reflect the fact that FMF and NOW post at least several news stories each week on their websites, while NARAL and Planned Parenthood post less. It may also suggest that reproductive rights organizations are less likely to speak out on their websites about reproductive justice issues that do not fit cleanly into their central priorities of reproductive health care or abortion access. This contrast would benefit from further study.

This study has multiple limitations, and indicates several directions for future research. First, the scope of this project was limited to material published on the organizations’ websites. Further study should investigate the organizations’ work more broadly, including Twitter and Facebook posts, offline programming, political work, and archives. This research could be conducted in one organization or several, and would benefit from the inclusion of in-person qualitative methods such as interviews and ethnography. Although the perspectives published online by these organizations are telling, the picture is incomplete without their offline actions.

Second, the organizations in this study built the relevance frame on two assumptions. I undertook to examine one, that racialized police brutality is a reproductive justice issue. However, this argument has meaning only in relation to a second, which was outside the scope of this study: that the organizations' work itself includes reproductive justice. This merits further study: how do these organizations construct this idea about their own work? Do reproductive rights and feminist organizations portray it differently from one another? Is it largely implicit or directly explained?

Third, it is clear that, along with other issues, the racialization of reproduction and mothering deserves far greater attention than it received here. In addition to being presented in the broader historical context, the theme could be investigated fruitfully in the publications and work of the big four organizations. One possibility is to examine how the trope of mothering plays out in the organizations' work, with particular attention to who is understood to have the right to have children *and* the right not to have children, alongside the right to parent the children they have I concentrate on here.

Fourth, this study underscores the complexity in how these three social movement organizations are influenced by the white racial frame (Feagin 2010). In framing racialized police violence as an issue of reproductive justice — and particularly in relying on parenting concerns to do so — they push back against white racial framing of “true” mothering and fathering as white. However, some assumptions of the white racial frame do surface in my data, including the implicit centering of a white subject. In addition to the article discussed above, in which NOW indirectly suggests their audience is white, the white racial frame manifests in a second NOW quotation. Pushing back against Republican claims that feminists support racially discriminatory Stand Your Ground laws, NOW writes,



...women aren't made safer by Stand Your Ground, but already-vulnerable members of our society are made even less safe. [Senator Ted Cruz and Ilya Shapiro] assume that women's groups won't care if Stand Your Ground endangers African-Americans, as long as women are thrown a bone. They are attempting to turn groups that should be standing in solidarity against each other. We won't fall into their trap. Women's groups should — and largely do — explicitly oppose Stand Your Ground laws. Intersectionality is an absolute necessity; the women's movement should not be concerned with women to the exclusion of all other groups. (NOW 87; December 20, 2013)

While full-throatedly endorsing intersectionality in this passage, NOW implies that “women” and “African Americans” are two distinct groups in at least two places. First, by describing women as a group that could be “thrown a bone” despite Stand Your Ground endangering African Americans; second, by describing the groups as two that “should be standing in solidarity” with one another. Though the sentiment expressed is admirable, this quotation constructs “women” and “African Americans” as mutually exclusive, or as groups with very little overlap. There is a striking contrast in this passage between the verbal support for intersectional analysis and that construction. The tension between intersectionality and the white racial frame was so clearly evident only rarely in my data, but indicates a need for further and closer examination in future studies.

Finally, I note that my use of sociological methods has likely generated a white logical and methodological tilt to the study (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). I strive to push back against this tilt. However, learning to use these methods for non-hegemonic purposes, and to develop new methods where the old ones are not up to the job, is an ongoing project set before social scientists.

A last reflection on my findings concerns the process of coming to this research question, and discussing it with others. In most of my conversations about this study with

white people who identify as feminists, the idea that Black Lives Matter encompasses reproductive justice elicited blank looks. Indeed, I did not reach this characterization independently myself. Yet the reasons given by the organizations studied here that racialized police violence is a reproductive justice issue are, at their core, traditional “women’s concerns.” Parenting and the vulnerability of women’s bodies have long been considered central to women’s movements. Therefore, this study reveals that a claim that seems to many white people, on its surface, surprising — that racialized police violence is a feminist issue — is in fact based on long-held understandings of women’s concerns. Yet these concerns have often concentrated on white women’s experiences, including the portrayal of “true” maternalism as white. Black Lives Matter, and the organizations I study here, resist this myopia through emphasizing Black parents as parents and Black women’s bodies as vulnerable to state violence.

Though it is outside the scope of this study to evaluate this possibility, it seems likely that the emphasis on *Black* parenting and *Black* women’s bodies is what renders this issue initially confusing to many white people as a “women’s issue.” It is possible that if white mothers were crying in the street after the police killed their (white) children, or if white women were being killed or sexually assaulted at a higher rate by the police, more white feminists would intuitively grasp the application of a feminist analysis to those crimes. This question, contextualized in Black feminist theory that has long made similar arguments, merits further investigation.

Feminist Majority Foundation’s, National Organization for Women’s, and NARAL Pro-Choice America’s construction of Black Lives Matter and racialized police violence as relevant to their work has both theoretical and practical implications. In addition to

illuminating three component parts of frame articulation, it may indicate the potential for future coalition work among social movements that focus largely on white supremacist state violence and those that focus primarily on patriarchal state violence. As both movements increasingly use an intersectional lens to analyze and frame their work and the issues they seek to address, the points of overlap come into sharp relief.

## APPENDIX A: WEBSITE SEARCH TERMS

1. "black lives matter"
2. "blacklivesmatter"
3. "ferguson"
4. "say her name"
5. "sayhername"
6. "black girls matter"
7. "alicia garza"
8. "patrisse cullors"
9. "opal tometi"
10. "sandra bland"
11. "trayvon"
12. "mckinney"
13. "renisha"
14. "eric garner"
15. "freddie gray"
16. "mike brown"
17. "michael brown"
18. "holtzclaw"

## REFERENCES

- ACRJ (Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice). 2005. "A New Vision for Advancing Our Movement for Reproductive Health, Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice." Retrieved Dec. 1, 2016 (<http://reproductivejustice.org/assets/docs/ACRJ-A-New-Vision.pdf>).
- Barakso, Maryann. 2005. *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Barakso, Maryann and Brian F. Schaffner. 2006. "Winning Coverage News Media Portrayals of the Women's Movement, 1969–2004." *Press/Politics* 11(4):22–44.
- Beal, Frances. [1970] 2008. "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female." Pp. 109–122 in *The Black Woman*, edited by T. Cade Bambara. New York, NY: Washington Square Press.
- Bell, Joyce M. 2016. "Introduction to the Special Issue on Black Movements." *Sociological Focus* 49(1):1–10.
- Benford, Robert and David Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611–639.
- Bonilla, Yarimar and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States." *Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 42(1):4–17.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2011. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

- Bracey, Glen E. II. 2016. "Black Movements Need Black Theorizing: Exposing Implicit Whiteness in Political Process Theory." *Sociological Focus* 49(1):11–27.
- Breines, Winifred. 2006. *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Buttenwieser, Sarah W. 2005. "Motherhood and the Quest for Reproductive Justice: An Interview with Loretta Ross and Marlene Gerber Fried, Co-Authors of 'Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice'." *The Mothers Movement Online*. Retrieved October 21, 2016 ([http://www.mothersmovement.org/features/05/s\\_butenwieser\\_0205/undivided\\_rights\\_1.htm](http://www.mothersmovement.org/features/05/s_butenwieser_0205/undivided_rights_1.htm)).
- Carney, Nikita. 2016. "All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media." *Humanity and Society* 40(2):180–199.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Chatelain, Marcia and Kaavya Asoka. 2015. "Women and Black Lives Matter." *Dissent* 63(3):54–61.
- Cohen, Cathy J. and Sarah J. Jackson. 2016. "Ask a Feminist: A Conversation with Cathy J. Cohen on Black Lives Matter, Feminism, and Contemporary Activism." *Signs* 41(4):775–792.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- . 2004. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- . 2015. “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 41:1–20.
- Combahee River Collective. [1977] 1981. “A Black Feminist Statement.” Pp. 201–18 in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Watertown, MA: Persephone.
- Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1(8):139–167.
- . 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):1241–1299.
- Crossley, Alison Dahl. 2017. *Finding Feminism: Millennial Activists and the Unfinished Gender Revolution*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Feagin, Joe. 2010. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Flavin, Jeanne. 2009. *Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women’s Reproduction in America*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. □
- Freelon, Deen, Charlton D. McIlwain, and Meredith D. Clark. 2016. “Beyond the Hashtags.” Center for Media and Social Impact: Washington, D.C.

- Fried, Marlene Gerber. 1990. *From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming a Movement*. Boston, MA: South End.
- Gordon, Leah. 2015. *From Prejudice to Power: The Rise of Racial Individualism in Midcentury America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Gutman, Herbert G. 1976. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Harris, Cheryl I. 1993. “Whiteness as Property.” *Harvard Law Review* 106(8):1707–1791.
- Hemmings, Clare. 2011. *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. 1982. *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies*. New York, NY: Feminist Press. □
- Hutchinson, Sikivu. 2015. “Do All Black Lives Matter? Feminism, Humanism, and State Violence.” *Humanist* 75(4):22.
- Hutchinson, Sikivu. 2016. “Whose Bodies? Black Lives Matter and the Reproductive Justice Imperative.” *Humanist* 76(3):10.
- Jackson, Sarah J. and Brooke Foucault Welles. 2016. “#Ferguson is Everywhere: Initiators in Emerging Counterpublic Networks.” *Information, Communication and Society* 19(3)397–418.
- Kim, Claire Jean. 2003. *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black–Korean Conflict in New York City*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- King, Dr. Martin Luther, Jr. 1963. “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Retrieved Jan. 3, 2017 ([http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular\\_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf)).



- Lindsey, Treva B. 2015. "Post-Ferguson: A 'Herstorical' Approach to Black Violability." *Feminist Studies* 41(1):232–237.
- Lipsitz, George. 1998. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Lorde, Audre. 1983. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." Pp. 94–101 in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Watertown, MA: Persephone.
- Luna, Zakiya T. 2009. "From Rights to Justice: Women of Color Changing the Face of US Reproductive Rights Organizing." *Sociology Without Borders* 4:343–64. □
- . 2010. "Marching Toward Reproductive Justice: Coalitional (Re) Framing of the March for Women's Lives\*." *Sociological Inquiry* 80(4):554–78.
- Luna, Zakiya and Kristen Luker. 2013. "Reproductive Justice." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 9:327–352.
- McKee, James B. 1993. *Sociology and the Race Problem: The Failure of a Perspective*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. 1981. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Watertown, MA: Persephone. □
- Morrison, Toni. 1992. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Olteanu, Alexandra, Ingmar Weber, and Daniel Gatica-Perez. 2016. "Characterizing the Demographics Behind the #BlackLivesMatter Movement." Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence.

- Ostrander, Susan A. 1999. "Gender and Race in a Pro-Feminist, Progressive, Mixed-Gender, Mixed-Race Organization." *Gender and Society* 13(5):628–642.
- Pellow, David. 2016. "Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge." *Du Bois Review* 13(2):221–236.
- Petchesky, Rosalind P. [1984] 1990. *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Poster, Winifred R. 1995. "The Challenges and Promises of Class and Racial Diversity in the Women's Movement: A Study of Two Women's Organizations." *Gender and Society* 9(6):659–679.
- Rankin, Kenrya. 2016. "Black Lives Matter Partners With Reproductive Justice Groups to Fight for Black Women." *Colorlines*. Retrieved July 26, 2016 (<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/Black-lives-matter-partners-reproductive-justice-groups-fight-Black-women>).
- Reger, Jo. 2002. "Organizational Dynamics and Construction of Multiple Feminist Identities in the National Organization for Women." *Gender and Society* 16(5):710–717.
- . 2005. *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women's Movement*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- . 2012. *Everywhere and Nowhere: Contemporary Feminism in the United States*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Richie, Beth E. 2000. "A Black Feminist Reflection on the Antiviolence Movement." *Signs* 25(4):1133–1137.
- Richie, Beth E., Dana-Ain Davis, and LaTosha Traylor. 2012. "Feminist Politics, Racialized Imagery, and Social Control." *Souls* 14(1–2):54–66.

- Rickford, Russell. 2016. "Black Lives Matter: Toward a Modern Practice of Mass Struggle." *New Labor Forum* 25(1):34–42.
- Rios, Jodi. 2016. "Flesh in the Street." *Kalfou* 3(1):63–78.
- Roberts, Dorothy. 1997. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- . 2002. *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Robnett, Belinda. 1997. *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Roediger, David. 2016. "Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past." *American Quarterly* 68(2):223–248.
- Ross, Loretta J. 2006. *What is Reproductive Justice?* Atlanta, GA: SisterSong. □
- Roth, Benita. 2004. *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, Ellen K. 1998. "Creating Partnerships for Change: Alliances and Betrayals in the Racial Politics of Two Feminist Organizations." *Gender and Society* 12(4):400–423.
- . 2000. "Everyone against Racism: Agency and the Production of Meaning in the Anti-Racism Practices of Two Feminist Organizations." *Theory and Society* 29(6):785–818.
- Silliman, Jael, Marlene Gerber Fried, Loretta Ross, and Elena R. Gutierrez. 2004. *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

- Smith, Andrea. 2005. "Beyond Pro-Choice Versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice." *NWSA Journal*. 17(1):119–40. □
- Snow, David. 2013. "Framing and Social Movements." *The Wiley–Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, edited by David A. Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans, and Doug McAdam. Blackwell Publishing Ltd: Malden, MA.
- Snow, David A. and Sarah A. Soule. 2010. *A Primer on Social Movements*. W.W. Norton and Company: New York, NY.
- Snow, David A., Robert D. Benford, Holly J. McCammon, Lyndi Hewitt, and Scott Fitzgerald. 2014. "The Emergence, Development, and Future of the Framing Perspective: 25+ Years Since 'Frame Alignment'\*." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 19(1):23–45.
- Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51(4):464–481.
- Solinger, Rickie. 2001. *Beggars and Choosers: How the Politics of Choice Shapes Adoption, Abortion, and Welfare in the United States*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Springer, Kimberly. 2005. *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968–1980*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Steinberg, Stephen. 2006. *Race Relations: A Critique*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2002. *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Tapia, Ruby C. 2011. *American Pietàs: Visions of Race, Death, and the Maternal*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2016. *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Taylor, Verta. 1999. "Gender and Social Movements: Gender Processes in Women's Self-Help Movements." *Gender and Society* 13(1):8–33.
- Thompson, Becky. 2002. "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 28(2):336–360.
- Thurber, Amie, Kelley Frances Fenelon, and Leah Marion Roberts. 2015. "Staying off the Megaphone and in the Movement: Cultivating Solidarity and Contesting Authority Among White Antiracist Activists." *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege* 5(2).
- White, Aaronette M. 1999. "Talking Feminist, Talking Black: Micromobilization Processes in a Collective Protest against Rape." *Gender and Society* 13(1):77–100.
- Zuberi, Tukufu. 2011. "Critical Race Theory of Society." *Connecticut Law Review* 43(5):1573–1591.
- Zuberi, Tukufu and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. 2008. *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.