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# An Examination of the Relationship Between Black Millennial Social Media Use and Political Activism

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLACK MILLENNIAL  
SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM

by

JANESSA BAILEY

Under the Direction of Jonathan Gayles, PhD

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between black millennial political activism and social media use. In Phase One of the study, the attitudes of 126 black 18-29 year olds were measured via survey. Results from the survey show that there is a significant relationship between social media use and political activism. In Phase Two, ten high-scoring participants from Phase One were interviewed and analyzed using thematic coding. Examination of the influence of social media on black millennials can inform strategy used for the advancement of black communities and black activism through widespread, effective communication and an advocacy platform accessible by all.

**INDEX WORDS:** social media, activism, black millennials, social movement, African-American, black social media, political activism

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JANESSA BAILEY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2017

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May 2017

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Bailey family and the constant support they have shown me in my journey to follow my passion and curiosity. Thank you for all your love, and know that you have mine always and forever.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I'd like to acknowledge the time that Jonathan Gayles invested in my education as I pushed to complete this work. Though it was not easy, I know that I am a better person and scholar because of your kindness and advice. To the rest of my faculty, thank you for providing me with an incredible foundation on which to build my success. And finally, thanks to all of the loving people who encouraged me to celebrate my journey as I learned and grew. I couldn't have done it without you.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The evolving relationship between black millennials and social media relies on both historical past and technological future. Previous research on the millennial generation has examined how it is shaping America and functioning within pre-existing cultural and economic structures (Winograd & Hais 2011., Cutler 2015., Ertas 2016.) What sets millennials apart from previous generations is their position within modern technology (Eastman, Iyer, Liao-Troth, Williams & Griffin 2014), complete with new ways to select, access and spread media. Millennials are anchored in their desire to connect without connecting too much, leaving them willing and able to participate, but quick to exit a conversation that does not please them (Wang, Yang & Haigh 2016., Bahadur 2016.)

Recent research suggests that if social media is not involved, everything from small businesses to billion dollar strategies fail (Rodriguez, Ajjan & Peterson 2016.) There are platforms that function within select communities, excluding those outside of their carefully selected audience (Chung, Anaza, Park & Hall-Phillips 2016.) There are others that encourage new users sign-up so that they can gather data and aggregate targeted content further than the average web user could ever suspect or see (King, O'Rourke & DeLongis 2014.) The Internet's reach is wide reaching and impactful. It has changed the way the world works by opening avenues for communication that did not previously exist in efficiency or ease of accessibility. The World Wide Web entangled itself so deeply in countries like the United States that it shifted the viscera of culture (Wanjiru 2016., Haigh, Russell & Dutton 2015), a culture that millennials have naturally adapted their actions and behaviors to reflect.

Modern technology and the first generation of digital natives introduced two resources that could not previously be used for political mobilization. Thus, black millennials have the opportunity to serve as contemporary socio-political agents who can express their political views

(Armah 2015., Diversi 2016) and the changes they would like to see (Davis 2015.) With the access many black millennials have to the Internet and social media, they can begin expressing their opinions and applying their communication towards specific goals. They can do this at any hour of the day in almost any environment by engaging themselves and others in socio-political discourse using the social networks they've already created online. Dialogue surrounding social change provides this generation the opportunity to disrupt American cycles of systematic oppression that often disenfranchise African American people (DePalma 2008.) An examination of the political activism of black millennials deserves note and observation, in order to accurately document the patterns of behavior that they display.

Through a series of online platforms, black millennials re-distributing the socio-economic power in America while managing to maintain their critically important cultural identity (Crenshaw 1993). Posts, tweets and hashtags are used to create socio-political discussion that provides black America with the information and transparency they need in order to be engaged in productive political conversation. If knowledge is power, then the knowledge that black millennials share on social media is the socio-political power of change. They are providing their community with a conversation that has not only been traditionally muffled from the mainstream, but also logistically laborious due to the obstacles of white-controlled media (La Pierre 1999.)

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how the social media is already being used by black millennials to exhibit political activism. Careful study must be done in order to learn about this intersection of race and youth in one of the first spaces within which they can operate almost entirely by their own volition. Because the flow of information via social media is inverted from the "trickle down" pattern of traditional media, black millennials have been born unceremoniously

into uncharted territory (Bump 2014). Their constant and consistent access to a platform that lacks intimidating censure calls for exploration.

Though they are not the first generation to protest in the name of black progress, they have the ability to promote racialized agendas with low probability of policing and as a less dangerous way to control and disseminate messages (Edwards & Urquhart 2016). This low-risk political behavior could be a welcome contrast to the historically high-risk conversations about race and politics in America, particularly considering the risk violent consequences. Some of these behaviors may already be occurring in concordance with socio-political and socio-behavioral theory (Disgupta 2008.) This study not only gauges how black millennials are using social media uniquely, but also the reasons why they are turning to social media as a form of political activism. The boundaries of political activism continue to expand due to modern technology, and therefore, should be examined in the case of the black millennial, as black youth attempt to stake greater claim in the American social economy and mobilize online.

## Background

Rather than learning about technology as teenagers or adults, digital natives were born into a world designed complete with QWERTY keyboards. Digital nativity begins with those born in 1980, who grew up engaging with rudimentary Internet tools that made lives more convenient and infinitely more technologically based (Prensky 2001.) First generation digital natives surpassed digital immigrants in their innate ability to use technology, not because of intellect, but because of availability. Rolodexes were less efficient floppy disks (Amankwah-Amoah 2016) that could not compete with the Palm Pilot. Technology turned social with Bulletin Board System (BBS), where users could share files and games through computers and telephone lines. Companies like

CompuServe offered tools that “turned [this] computer into a travel agent for Jennie, a stock analyst for Ralph and...it’s sending Herbie to another galaxy.” (Popular Science 1983, p. 1)

Those looking for less intergalactic connections joined sites like America Online, one of the major Internet providers of the 1990s. With a disk and a landline, anyone could turn their computer into their living room – creating a profile that reflected their personality in what is considered the first custom content. Profiles ballooned from a few phrases about availability and mood to blurry avatar photos to pages complete with music, colors and themes (Brown & Thomas 2014). You could see who was seeing you and vice versa on platforms like MySpace. One Ivy League student paired these exclusive personal online content creation modules with the exclusivity and connections of his alma mater and created Thefacebook.

The 2004 creation of Facebook was a starting point for distinct and organized Internet communities (Einasto 2015). The Internet was the perfect host for new technology to spread its roots and co-mingle with the infrastructure of media and communication. The blossoming millennial generation was well suited to learn its functionality and stretch its boundaries because they grew up with electronic communication within easy reach (DeVaney 2015). Society and communication created an intersection of second-generation digital natives that make up the millennial demographic. These millennials are intuitive Internet users who create tangibles from what previous generations only saw as thin air (Latif, Uckun, Demir 2015). Reality and the cyberscape share many of the same messages. Most importantly, their co-dependent relationship with the Internet has helped them learn and grow their whole lives.

Social media originated within a series of Internet-based platforms that encourage the sharing of facts, thoughts and media. As the second wave of the Internet, or Web 2.0, social media transferred the privilege of content generation from the exclusive hands of technologically advanced web creators to the masses (Lee 2012). The evidence in this literature review shows that,

as a communicatory tool, social media transcended previous modes of communication by exceeding the limits of immediacy, cost, quality, reach, usability, permanence and frequency that was previously available in one instance (Obar, Zube & Lampe n.d.) African Americans spend four hours and twenty-two minutes a week digesting information from social media on their phones, tablets and desktop computers - more than any other media form available, including audio (radio and podcast), television and video (Nielsen 2015).

Further, the interactive component of social media gives its users unique opportunities to instantly participate and represent themselves in a wide range of events, conversations, and forms of activism (Oser, Hooghe & Marien 2013).

This indicates a justifiable relationship between black millennial social media use and its ability to be used for political activism, as an easily available method for black communities to control messaging, engage in protest behavior and unify without the harsh historical censorship of traditional media. The fluidity of the online sphere creates plentiful opportunity for expression without the physical threat of backlash when black users address race, justice and social change (Appio, Martini, Massa & Tessa 2016). Social media allows black millennials to evade the structural racism that hindered many generations before them, and imposed limitations on the public deconstruction of one of America's greatest problems.

There is a lack of research about the effects of social media on the black community - particularly when it comes to socio-political agency. While studies refer to millennial social media use - and even argued that black youth spend more time online than their white counterparts (Harp, Bachmann, Rosas-Moreno & Loke 2010) - there are still more information gaps to explore. The relationship between black millennials and their range of political expression using social media begs exploration because social media is a tool native to their generation. The lack of

information provides reason to explore black millennial political activism through the lens of their online behavior and its effect on their livelihoods.

### 1.1.1 Literature Review

By definition, basic models of political activism show that demanding forms of political participation often only include a small minority who frequently participate in campaigning, contacting representatives and community organization (Norris, Boix & Stokes 2009). Traditional protest politics are often represented through demonstration and strike - a distinct form of activism that belonged to a small elite. Structural resources aid social segments in mobilization and becoming politically active, based on distributions of education, income and occupation and along with ethnicity and age (Almond & Verba 1963). Cultural attitudes motivate engagement and create a positive correlation between information and interest, the belief that one can impact outcomes and make a difference in their own institutional, social or political space (Alwin & Tufiş 2016). These cultural attitudes are also more likely to be formed in youth and to remain intact as youth mature (Rekker, Keijsers, Branje & Meeus 2015).

Of course, social media is not the first battleground for black civic engagement (Umoja 2002., Hope & Jagers 2014.) For centuries, black demonstrations of socio-political change emerged from the singular voices of great leaders and the collective voices of the people. Black political movements are grounded in the hypotheses of those who were able to dismantle traditionally white social movement models and modify them to better support black mobilization.

#### 1.1.1.1 Pluralism and Classical Models of Social Movement

Classical models of social movement indicate strain that leads to individually felt tensions that cause a tip of the scales against collective contentment (McAdam 1982). These strains can be social processes or occurrences that cause a segment of society to reach and surpass its threshold

of comfort. In these instances, members of the segment experiencing strain have a psychological need to manage the tension of a stressful situation (Hoffman, Granger, Vallejos & Moats 2016). Their actions are motivated by individual discontent and result in collective pressure that becomes a social movement. As individuals band together and become a collective sharing the same goal, each individual psyche believes that changing the parameters of their behavior will bring anomalous consequences that will change their social economy.

Traditionally, these movements are therapeutic and have little political resonance, except as pre-cursors to “real” political action. Classical models are based on the assumption that unhappy individuals are satiated by its emotional outburst and promotion of the idea of equal social power (Leach 2010). These people have a belief that the scales of social justice will be restored to balance through their demand for equality. Very similar to the euphemism, “the squeaky wheel gets the oil,” scenarios like this concentrate on the internal pressures that create what economists call a “demand-pull” scenario (Voyvoda & Yeldan 2015). Actors in classical models of social movement need something, and believe they are entitled to that, so they express their discontent.

Ideally, if the discontent is addressed, the equilibrium of society will be restored due to the concept of a fair distribution of power (Celoria 2016). This utopian concept suggests that there is social economy in existence where everyone can be pleased regardless of how much power they actually have. If there is social movement of any kind, then the extraordinary social actors have achieved success, regardless of the size of the movement.

In the past, social movement was the result of an uprising that received the attention of those who had the ability to change the social economy. Those who desire social change spark their movement, and then it is taken into account or it is not (Hartman, Neame & Gedro 2014). Either the utopian social economy exists or it does not. This idea is recognized as a classically rational view of the distribution of socio-economic power and is central to pluralist democracy

(Kolln n.d). Problematically, the American pluralist democracy implies that regardless of the socio-economic status of the collective, the people of the democracy should be pleased when there is a reaction from the stakeholders and decision-makers of America at all.

The belief that American society functions based on a fair system complete with checks and balances allows many people to feel as though they live in a just society. Without a believable set of socio-political standards then social movements could and would happen every day. Every day, people would state their feelings and come together to promote the idea of change to better their lives. They would demand that the decision-makers and stakeholders of America recognize their disproportionate power, and provide them with the equal rights that they have been promised by the very documents that established the United States. This regular occurrence of social movement would take away any suggestion that it was deviant or eccentric, and instead imply that we were living in a nation that required a great deal of change to its social economy (Greenfield 2016). It would be as if protest became the new patriotism, and the fundamentals of American society would have to be redefined.

Classical models of social movement allow agents to continue to play on a loop of their own participation as not to come to the stark realization that American democracy is flawed. When a group of agents realizes they have the ability and opportunity to redistribute (or potentially take) power rather than complying with existing or traditional circumstances, other models of social movement are employed.

#### 1.1.1.2 Contemporary Models of Social Movement - Taking Power from the Elite

Contemporary models of social movement focus more closely on strategic opportunity than psychological motivation. These forms of social movements are not the result of the belief in

extraordinary circumstances; they are recognition of potential to redefine what is ordinary (Wahie, Sinha & Sinha 2016). Resource mobilization models focus on social movement as a strategic reaction to an oppressive environment. Once an underserved social segment perceives a social imbalance, they make the conscious choice of attempting to gain more power, despite the traditional distribution of it. The segment recognizes that there is a largess of power that needs to be dismantled. Who better to become the new decision-makers and stakeholders, but themselves? Rather than trusting that the scale has been calibrated, actors in resource mobilization models seek to re-calibrate the scale (Gutierrez & Lipman 2016).

Re-calibration of a social economic scale first requires an assessment of change. This assessment of change requires the discontent social segment to inventory the resources that can be used to seize their opportunity and gain more control (McAdams, 1982, p 23). They must recognize that they are the ones that will make change happen for themselves and others who believe in similar ideals. Agents in these models push for a new standard of socio-economic status that gives them more power. In many cases, it is more power than the collective has ever experienced before and throws the existing social economy out of balance, which opposes the results many seek from following classical models (McAdam, 1982, p.28).

As resource mobilization agents recognize an increase in political opportunity, a “cost-push” strategy emerges. There is an increased socio-economic price for what the collective has decided they need in order to have an adequate amount of control. The only payment for this increased price is socio-economic power (DeJong & Love 2015).

Malcolm Gladwell’s social media critique argues that without the strong ties of high-risk activism, social media users are merely participants in non-hierarchical social groups with opinions (Gladwell 2015). He considers “digital protestors” void of the impact of more disciplined activists where there is less room for moral compromise, conflict and error. Similarly, other research

completed on networked social movements criticizes the lack of leaders in online movements, and considers the organizers as choreographers and soft leaders (NIKIPORETS-TAKIGAWA 2017).

#### 1.1.1.2.1 Why the Models Matter

Despite the existence of legislation and amendments that have sought to provide all Americans with equal rights in the form of an equal distribution of power, actually achieving this would require overcoming American racism - an elitist distribution of socio-economic and socio-political power that has been passed from white hand to white hand (DiTomaso 2015).

The existing distribution of socio-economic power has left black Americans disenfranchised, abused and constantly aware of the systemic power that white Americans have over them (Jones 2016). It has led to the deaths of Michael Brown, Sandra Bland and Philando Castile without any criminal prosecution of their killers. There is little evidence of justice in these cases except in the opportunity it has given black America to coalesce and decide if they will continue to cry out for equality that they have never experienced, or if they will find a course of action that requires payment in the form of socio-economic power greater than what they have ever experienced. The elitism of white power must be dismantled in order for this to happen. America's white supremacy is deeply engrained in America's distribution of power. To insinuate that black Americans should employ the classical model by constantly asking for a positive result from a skewed distribution implies that black Americans do not seek relief from the injustices that have plagued them since slaves were brought to America and the discriminatory treatment of black people in this country began.

### 1.1.1.3 The Importance of Indigenous Leadership

Doug McAdams' Political Process Model pulls from classical and resource mobilization theories, but capitalizes on their flaws (McAdam, 1982, p.40). This theory also possesses strong belief in the power of indigenous organizational strength. Instead of waiting for the elite to hand down or make way for political change, members of the community use their own networks of communication and resources to seek political opportunities. These opportunities fluctuate, and challengers must choose when this fluctuation can best serve them. They improve their own status by reducing the power of their opponents or increasing the power of their insurgency, thus resulting in social movement. McAdam's identification of key indigenous resources such as black colleges and organizations like the NAACP, also included black churches as in indigenous resource. Both resources allowed for the quick recruitment of protest members, pre-existing communication networks, and pre-existing models of leadership structures.

Indigenous leadership is a valuable tool used in Weber's theory of charismatic movements (Fantuzzo 2015). Many believe in the success of various Civil Rights missions as the result of people preferring and loyally following charismatic leaders. Rather than being a purely peripheral effect, it often leads to increased feelings of unity and an easier organizational experience (Griffith, Connelly, Thiel & Johnson 2015). Morris' interpretation of indigenous leadership and strategic resource mobilization described the Civil Rights movement as a success based on the ripples created by highly publicized central organizations and the manifestations of smaller, more incremental fights for justice that created a successful cycle of social change (Morris 1984.)

Concepts explored by McAdam and Morris have been preserved as socio-political idealism over time. Though much of the cultural context remains intact, but with the incorporation of new technology and possibility. Online networks provide a forum for opinions and action beyond what is officially reported by the mass media, thus creating an environment that promotes opinion,

comment, the significance of local events and the comprehensive context of the news (Ess 2001). Research shows that millennials are thinking and acting accordingly.

#### 1.1.1.4 Contemporary Psychological and Behavioral Trends

A measure of millennials' situational autonomous motivation towards engagement in social media affirms a positive relationship between social media and charitable attitudes (Paulin, Ferguson, Jost & Fallu 2014). When comparing the appeal of others-beneficial vs. self-beneficial motivators, this study revealed the millennial willingness to contribute to an event based purely on self-governed desires. Millennials' autonomous motivation strongly predicted supportive intentions and mediated influence of empathetic identification with a cause - the basis of genuine socio-political activity (Muñoz & Culton 2016).

Socio-political activity stemming from social media allows information to emerge from the bottom up, instead of the top-down dispersion seen from traditional forms of media such as the television or newspaper (Ems 2014). Twitter, Facebook and YouTube serve as platforms for more extensive, immediate dialogue throughout the masses. Online news media have promoted increased political efficacy (Moeller, de Vreese, Esser & Kunz 2014), which distinguishes itself from offline efficacy when classified as e-participation - a unique category of engaging politically through online channels (Gibson & Cantijoch 2013).

Trends like these are significant when forming a holistic view of the power of social media. As a relatively new form of media, social media is best understood and analyzed in comparison to more traditional iterations of media (Dewan & Ramaprasad 2014). When assessing these trends through a racial lens, there is significance in African-American psychological and behavioral trends when interacting with traditional media channels - supporting to studies that have demonstrated

that education is a significant predictor in the willingness of millennials to criticize and participate in political activity (Gandy 2001). In addition, socio-political trust increases based on the social capital and previous participation of African Americans in social media (Mangum 2011). Once trends like these have been accounted for, the black social media profile begins to emerge.

#### 1.1.1.5 The Black Social Media Profile

Studies show that African Americans age 18-29 spend more time on Facebook compared to their 30+ year-old counterparts. Within these users, over 25% check of their Facebook 6-10 times a day and nearly 17% check the platform over 20 times a day (Lee 2012). These users created homogenous Facebook communities, with less than 14% of African American Facebook friends being non-black, meaning that Facebook fosters a great amount of intra-racial communication in this generation. Inclusion of additional platforms shows social media users who affiliated themselves with intra-racial gangs also used Twitter and Facebook to maintain communication and reputation within their communities in coordination with their desire to seek public love, recognition of manhood and reinforcements or power and self (Patton, Eschmann & Butler 2013).

While many people often seek these same feelings of community and love from the black church, the social media profile of the black church is not congruent with that of millennials themselves. From 2002 to 2012, the black church showed low participation in socio-political issues such as social justice, social problems in the black community and linked fate mentality that were discussed online (Barnes & Nwosu 2014). The absence of church participation in black social media is not reflective the role of the black church in reality, where the church usually plays a prominent role in community agency and uplift.

Like the church, black businesses also have a lessened social media profile. Predominantly African American populations have a minimized presence on social media sites like Foursquare as a result (Fekete 2015). Black businesses experience less traffic, revenue and overall economic activity compared to businesses that had heightened representation on social media, falling into the patterns of a racialized cyberscape (Crutcher & Zook 2009).

Understanding the parameters of the black social media profile today reveals many of the opportunities that black millennials see when they log on and participate. There is little research on the subject of the black community's comprehensive social media profile in comparison to the profile of the black community in reality. Historical and data-driven studies could be conducted to identify why specific components of the black community, such as the aforementioned groups, are comparatively absent.

#### 1.1.1.5.1 When Black Millennials Turn to Social Media

Millennials turn to social media as a tool in a variety of different situations to fulfill their needs. For educational purposes, students access social media to learn from one another and echo topics discussed in high school and collegiate classrooms (Graham 2014).

In emergency situations there are similar upward trends (Simon, Goldberg & Adini 2015) . Populations of millennials are using social media as platform for information dissemination in more than 60% of emergency occurrences, with Twitter as the primary network used. During these emergencies, social media participants were doing active research and providing followers with their own version of events, often using hashtags generated by the events such as #BlackLivesMatter.

Eliminating the urgency of emergency, research suggests that Internet users who are interested in news are more likely to engage in political and social online activities, particularly when they are already members of social media networks (Vicente and Novo 2014). Access to technology and the globalization of communication amplify the ability for this generation to distribute news (Korson 2015). So much so, that there is evidence that the use of social media encourages youth with Facebook accounts to engage in higher levels of protest behavior (Valenzuela, Arriaganda & Scherman 2012).

### 1.1.2 Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) states that media users seek media sources that best fulfill their needs, and that users have alternate choices that could potentially satiate this need. The scope of this theory allows researchers to gauge the adoption and use of contemporary media aligned with the needs of those using the media. It captures the rippled and patterned use of social media including media digestion, thoughts and behaviors prompted by media digestion, and the sharing of these thoughts and behaviors creating new social media content for others to digest and engage in.

Questions measuring why participants turn to social media, when they use social media, and how social media makes them feel will be used to examine the use and gratification of the media to satiate the human condition, revealing objectives that detail the underlying motives for individual media use, explain of how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs, and identify the consequences, both positive and negative, of individual media use. The knowledge gathered will reference black millennials' cognitive, affective, social integrative, personal integrative,

or escapist needs – which can then be assigned to the socio-political activities that they participate in based on the needs met by social media.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This study used mixed methods in two phases. Phase One required a quasi-experimental design that measured social media use and examines the parameters of black millennial activism using the Activism Orientation Scale (AOS) and the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS). The responses informed Phase Two, which allowed participants to describe how their political activity has been influenced by their own use of social media. Students with the highest scores on the combined AOS and SMUIS instrument were selected for Phase 2.

Data collection for this study included a questionnaire (Appendix A) followed by an interview for a segment of the sample. Interviews were guided by a series of questions created by the researcher (Appendix B). Audio recordings of the interviews were played back for data transcription and coding. Interview participants were asked to review coded information and provide insight on the accurate portrayal of their responses into thematic code.

### 2.1 Phase One Design

The quasi-experimental design examines the relationship between social media use and political activism. The SMIUS and AOS were introduced and administered to the participants during phase one.

#### 2.1.1 Sample

A group of 100-200 young black adults attending Georgia State University represented the study's sample. All were between the ages of 18-29 and enrolled in at least one course provided by the Department of African American Studies. Students identified as black and had to use at least one social media platform to participate. The sample consisted of both undergraduate and graduate students, as they all fit the definition of millennial. Each member of the sample consented to taking an online survey in order to participate.

### 2.1.2 Setting

The instrument was administered to participants online. The students were given two weeks to participate in the study beginning at the end of class and lasting until the end of class two weeks later. Following the completion of the instrument, the researcher selected participants for inclusion in Phase Two. Students used their laptop computers, phones, tablets or any other computer with internet access.

### 2.1.3 Measures

The two scales used in the instrument contain items that score participants' frequency of political activism, social media usage and frequency of use.

#### 2.1.3.1 Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS)

This scale measures how much social media is integrated into the social behavior and daily routines of users as well as its importance and the emotional connection to its use. Consisting of elements from the Facebook Use Intensity Scale and the Conscientiousness and Agreeableness subscales of the Big Five Inventory, the SMUIS contains a 10-item two-factor scale with a reliability coefficient of .914. This scale has been used to measure engagement and media richness (Liu 2009) and for understanding changes in belief and attitude toward information technology usage (Bhattacharjee & Premkumar 2004).

#### 2.1.3.2 MIDSS Activism Orientation Scale (AOS)

This scale is comprised of two subscales containing 28 items measuring Conventional Activism and seven items measuring High-Risk Activism. With a .96 internal consistency, it gauges the psychometrics of activist orientation that validate an individual's willingness to engage in social action. This scale has been used for studies measuring social action activity including individual orientation toward engagement in social action (Corning 2002) and the role of autonomy support

and autonomy orientation in prosocial behavior engagement (Gagne 2003) with questions about political motivations and behaviors.

#### 2.1.4 Procedures

The researcher asked Georgia State University professors for permission to introduce the research at the beginning or end of a scheduled class. The link for this study was provided to students by their professors or the researcher via an online link on iCollege. An email from iCollege was sent to their official university email address.

The survey contained 58 Likert scale items. These items come from the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) including Social Integration and Emotional Connection and Integration into Social Routines subscales and the Activism Orientation Scale (AOS) measuring the propensity for activism. Incomplete surveys were not recorded. Participants were given a two-week window in which to complete the survey.

#### 2.1.5 Analysis

Surveys were reviewed for accuracy then recorded, scored and saved in SPSS. Data will be analyzed to examine the relationships between social media use and activism orientation. Any statistically-significant relationship between social media use (as measured by the SMUIS) and activism (as measured by the AOS) was determined by way of parametric or nonparametric inferential statistical tests including correlation and regression measures.

## 2.2 Phase Two Design

The qualitative portion of the proposed research will explore participants' perspectives on the relationship between their own activism and social media use. A group of 10 young black adults that attend Georgia State University and with high scores on the blended SMUIS and AOS instrument will construct the sample for Phase Two. Each student identified as black and

regularly used at least one social media platform (Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook). The sample group for Phase Two may also contain a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students.

### 2.2.1 Setting

Phase Two of this study took place in the Georgia State University Library. The researcher conducted 10 interviews in a study room containing only the researcher and participant.

### 2.2.2 Measures

The researcher spoke with participants explaining their high composite score from the quantitative survey and how they became candidates for Phase Two.

The questions that participants were asked focused on the ways that social media contact impacts their behavior. Participants were asked questions about how much social media influences their actions outside of the digital sphere, how often they share socio-political content with their peers and if a social media topic has ever prompted them to retweet or share a post.

### 2.2.3 Procedures

Data collection for the second part of this study required interviews. The interviews were guided by a series of questions created by the researcher (Appendix B). Audio recordings of the interviews allowed the playback of data and the subsequent transcription and coding. Interview participants were asked to review their coded responses and provide insight on the accurate portrayal of their responses into thematic code.

The interview procedure is below:

1. Interested participants read and signed the informed consent and scheduled their interview date and time.
2. The participants arrived for their interview, filled out the questionnaire, and be asked the guided interview questions

3. Data from the interviews was transcribed and coded. First Cycle coding included Values, Attitudes and Beliefs and second cycle coding included emerging themes.
4. Validity was ensured by asking the research participant to verify the transcribed and coded themes and information gathered from the interview

#### 2.2.4 Analysis

For the purposes of this study, all participants were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences as members of the black social media community. Codes selected for the synthesis of this research focused on what black millennials value about the agency provided by social media and reveal characteristics specific to this culture sharing group.

Value, attitudes and beliefs coding was used to identify what black millennials prioritize when they participate in socio-political activities based on social media engagement and second cycle coding will include emerging themes that these actions represent.

#### 2.2.5 Reliability and Validity

Qualitative reliability and validity were ensured by through researcher commitment to asking questions as written, and by refraining from guiding the participant's responses in any way. Research questions were written without bias, and inter-rater reliability was used in order to verify that the instrument used was interpreted similarly to the interpretation of the researcher. It is reinforced through respondent validation. The researcher also took reflexive measures to ensure that sound coding decisions are made.

The triangulation of the literature review in this thesis, the qualitative study and the quantitative study ensured formative and sampling validity by exploring the dimension of the research question.



### 3 RESULTS

Here, the results of the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study are explained in detail including the data collected in Phase One and thematic findings of Phase Two.

#### 3.1 Phase One Results - Quantitative

Phase One of the studied was conducted with a sample of 126 black millennials (N) over the course of two weeks. Study descriptives include the age of the participant, their activism propensity score (APS) and their social media integration score (SMIS.)

Table 1.1 Study Descriptives

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	121	17	29	23.17	3.390
APS	121	11	93	54.27	18.992
SMIS	121	64	186	116.12	23.846

Using the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) and MIDSS Activism Orientation Scale (AOS), data captured reflects the overall political propensity of the sample.

The first phase of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between the political activism and social media use of black millennials. Questions measuring the likelihood of a black millennial to participate in a politically- inspired behavior, such as attending a political rally or speaking to a friend or family member about a political issue, were asked in order to accurately capture data. Trends in the data suggested that black millennials are prone to activities such as boycotting brands for political reasons, confronting jokes or innuendos made against a cause and signing petitions for a political cause. As their inclination towards frequent social media use

increased, the data also reflects a slightly significant increase in the degree to which they also participated in political activism, informing the researcher that the two variables are positively related to one another.

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Table 1.2 Regression Summary

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R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.268	.072	.064	18.375

---

Table 1.3 Regression - ANOVA®

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Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
3104.120	1	3104.120	9.194	.003

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Table 1.4 Regression - Coefficients

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	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	29.505	8.337		3.539	.001
SMUS	.213	.070	.268	3.032	.003

The results were statistically significant  $F(1, 119) = 9.194, p < .005$ . The equation identified to understand this relationship was  $PA = 29.505 + .213 (SMUI)$ . In this study, social media use explained 6.4% of political activism.

Data collected from this study was taken from a sample aged 18-29 years old at the time of instrument availability. High scoring participants from Phase One were recruited to participate in Phase Two.

### 3.2 Phase Two Results - Qualitative

The results in this chapter will examine how the participants experienced social media as a vital part of black millennial culture.

Ten participants were interviewed for the study. The first was Leigh, a 26-year-old graduate student with both academic and professional experiences. Leigh's social media integration was incredibly high on the Phase One instrument.

Next, Hannah, a 19-year-old woman who identified as more of an observer online, but emphasized strong values in her political activism that she demonstrated offline. She and another participant, Shauna, were polar opposites when it came to how much they engaged with their respective social media communities. Shauna often elaborated on her conversations with her friends and followers and how she sought them out.

Kara, a 20-year-old, seemed to discuss social media as a necessary evil. As she spoke, she often underscored her aversions with negatively connoted terminology.

The frequency with which Leah, 29, checks her online profiles was very high on the quantitative instrument. Though she does not post often, she revealed that she pays very close attention to many of the posts she sees, so that she can stay connected with her friends from afar.

Ryan was a 25-year-old woman with very intentional ways of creating her social media community. She expressed this through her descriptions of the spaces she likes to immerse herself in online.

Avery was a 27-year-old male who also paid attention to the digital spaces where he consciously consumed information. He said many positive phrases surrounding the character of the people he chose to have in his online communities. Avery valued social media as a tool for learning and exchange.

Tyrell, 28, had some doubts about the future of social media, but did enjoy sharing resources online. He particularly liked to communicate through Instagram, which he talked about most positively out of the three platforms mentioned in the interviews: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

The last two participants, Sasha and Cameron both displayed a high level of discipline in the way they use social media. Their ages, 26 and 25, respectively, were accompanied by careful representation and diversity within their social media. Cameron, however, did have more skepticism when it came to the credibility of the things she sees online.

All participants were assigned a pseudonym.

Participants mentioned Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as go-to source for everything from hearing current events to serving as a space for conversation that they felt enhanced their own knowledge of the world around them. Many implied that there was a safety that they felt in the community that they hand-selected to be on their phones, an escape from feelings of loneliness and alienation or lack of knowledge on specific subjects. Of the many themes that were revealed from the study, the most prominent were Information, Communication Facilitation, Cultural Satisfaction, Security and exhibitions of Political Activism.

### 3.2.1 Information

The theme that was most densely represented in the quantitative data was Information. By mentioning this in so many ways when discussing social media, it is true that the participants saw social media platforms as a both a means to send and receive information, confirmation that it is a independent model of communication.

One of the most integral components of any communication model is the message, the information sent from sender to receiver. The message is sent using a medium. As the participants made more references to information throughout their interviews, they supported social media's role as a critical medium for information transfer.

Each participant in the study not only mentioned the word "information," but also cited sources of information that they seek online, particularly accounts they follow on Twitter and Facebook to ingest news. Throughout the qualitative sample, participants spoke of the information they gave and received online. After being asked about the impact of social media on their political knowledge Hannah stated:

A lot, because I don't care. I feel like I see it, but when I see it on Twitter its at a level where I can understand it. I know what's going on because its people who are out there who are knowledgeable about politics and they put it in its most basic form. I like that.

Even those who were not engaging in online conversation through activities like commenting or retweeting tweets were still receiving information from social media, symbolizing notable instances of information intake. When Hannah said that the information she was receiving on social media was at a level where [she] could understand it, she implies that she trusts her social media to deliver information in a way that she can comprehend. This insinuates the concepts of

context and language, two signs of intra-cultural communication. Hannah does not only rely on the people who were putting out the information, but she also relies on the way that she receives the information. Her answers indicate that she viewed social media as a detail-rich medium for cultural news, similar to the way that previous generations may have indicated that newspapers, radio shows or the evening news was the source for their detail-rich information. Social movement requires the transition of messages within communities in order to make progress. It is true that the black millennials interviewed here saw social media as a means for information transfer.

When social media is not being used by the collective as a means of message transfer, it can also be used to benefit the individual. Commentary gathered or engaged in on social media can motivate a user to investigate and learn new information to keep themselves and others informed. For example, Leigh made a statement about online socio-political engagement revealed the importance of its success to her.

I do think that sharing and engaging in socio-political discussions on social media does have an impact. While I do think that it may be minimal, I think that if I do share an article or status that is opposite of someone that I am friends with, that it may lead to them thinking about that particular topic in different light or from a different perspective. I have had one significant engagement where someone expressed an opinion that was factually inaccurate and we were able to have an intellectual discourse about it and from that conversation, he said that he would do his own fact checking and have his own conversations with people he knew in person who were more knowledgeable in the topic than he was. From that conversation, he later came back and said that through our conversation, he learned a lot and I had encouraged a change of opinion and world view.

Situations like the one described here are valuable to the individual black millennial as communication facilitation. In these cases, the exchange of messages results in a change of attitude which, as noted later in this chapter, is a fully conceptualized act of activism as defined by black millennials themselves. Some millennials are even introducing other media to their followers through social media platforms, like when Sasha says:

I like tweeting about podcasts that influence me, and then providing [them] as a resource for people.

Though Information might seem like a broad topic to single out, it is important to remember that no method of goal-oriented communication will prove effective if it cannot properly transfer information from sender to receiver (Goldreich, Juba & Sudan 2012). Communication comes in many forms, not all of which are enriching to others. That black millennials find so much reciprocity and exchange on social media is indicative of a successful transmission of information and a reliable form of communication at their fingertips.

### 3.2.2 Communication Facilitation

To assess communication facilitation, communication-related terms like “talk,” “look” and “read” were categorized along with phrases such as “interact with,” “pay attention,” and “go to” in cases where participants sought out information. Through the tools provided to them by social media, they are actively participating in the facilitation of communication within their social media communities.

As messages are sent from sender to receiver, it is not always guaranteed that they ripple outwards to reach new audiences, nor that they are absorbed by the intended receiver. In

order for this to be demonstrated, there has to be some kind of signal that the messages were understood and shared.

As noted in the literature review, there is a heavy emphasis on sharing online within the millennial community. Sharing on social media can range from posting about the weather to writing what some of the participants referred to as “thinkpieces” or opinion-based social media posts. Thinkpieces often take place in long-form and analyze a current event, cultural paradox or unpopular opinion based on the topic. The range of sharing that can happen on social media is representative of a spectrum of different dialogues that black millennials are using social media for. They may post photos of their mothers on Mother’s Day, but that does not mean that they are going to write about why they chose to vote for their chosen political candidate. Some millennials do not believe that social media has the capacity to articulate highly-contextual messages and therefore, may not share as much as others. An example of this is when Leah was asked what her preferred method of discussing current events and said:

I usually prefer communicating current events between peers/friends in person or via direct communication like texts or even a group chat with a small group of trusted friends... speaking in person can be more meaningful just because non-verbal cues such as sarcasm or body language can aid in a difficult topic of discussion.

Though it may seem as though Leah did not rely on social media as their medium for discussion, they still spoke of social media as if it was a form of communication that was available for them to use. Mentions of “non-verbal cues,” “sarcasm” and “body language” are often used in tangent with indirect communication such as facial expression, tone of voice and gestures. The implication that social media is not the most meaningful way to communicate does not mean that it

lacks the ability to facilitate conversation. It means that there are many users who cannot or do not have the ability to use social media with nuance in order to introduce means of indirect communication into the platform.

Though black millennials cannot apply sarcasm to the characters they use to create social media messages, they do have the aid of technology that help them with the facilitation of emotion, such as emojis or the use of .gif animation - showing small clips of movies, cartoons or pop culture references that are meant to convey a feeling. Many black millennials recognize these kinds of interactions very quickly by beginning a post with the phrase, "When you..." and applying their .gif to show their friends and followers exactly how they feel through their resemblance to the clip.

Even though there were various ways that those interviewed participated in communication facilitation, they still did so both directly and indirectly when spending time on social media.

Those who felt as though social media did not adequately serve them as a means of communication facilitation instead demonstrated that some black millennials have a highly-advanced way of communicating with one another online. Black millennials have the ability to make differences between posting a Facebook status and having a face-to-face conversation, the contemporary decision to talk to a friend rather than post gossip in the newspaper. Once out of the hands of the receiver, a message is then left to be interpreted, considered or swiped to the bottom of a screen.

In order to use social media most effectively, black millennials must be able to find a common thread from themselves to their audiences. The chances of going viral is a numbers game, based on the most sensationalistic qualities of a post, but to have an engaging social media presence is largely about finding common language with your friends and followers. This way, social media users can provide messages with the greatest possibility of being understood by the community they have built online. If that is not a user's goal, then it is possible that they prefer

passive engagement (pressing “like” or reading and thinking about posts) or do not wish to have a reciprocal exchange of ideas on their social media at all. When asked how many people she regularly interacts with online that she has never met in person, Shauna replies, “hundreds,” an indicator of a very large audience at her fingertips and high potential for widespread topic discussion.

### 3.2.3 The Curation of Culture

The care with which a millennial builds their social media ensures safety and reinforces many cultural values. As millennials hand-pick their senders and receivers online, they also push out others that make them unhappy or that they do not like hearing from. This is an act of culture building. As black millennials continue to tailor who they surround themselves with online, they continue to curate their own online culture. Their followers can unfollow them or choose to engage with them if they do not like what they are saying. Or, as many social media users do, block the naysayer whenever they become too much of a burden or a menace. Those senders are not welcomed in the user’s culture and by the user’s will, they are no longer able to connect online.

While this seems like it may be harsh treatment, black millennials value the ability they have to decide exactly who they associate themselves with. As college students and young adults under 30, it is the logical way to keep your social media clean of posts you do not like and feedback that could range from aggressive to inflammatory. Tyrell states:

Reading comprehension is at an all-time low. Critical thinking is not what it used to be.

That’s annoying.

Similarly, Ryan explains the tense reactions that can come from social media by saying:

They took debate out of school which is one of the necessary things we need to defend your point to the extent that you actually listen to someone else's point.

Ryan expresses frustration at this when discussing her social media community, wishing to amend this part of her online cultural experience to make it more similar to traditional forms of communication. The references to their online communities frustrating them does show that education level is a significant factor in the communication that these two black millennials prefer.

There were significant references to culture throughout the interviews with the participants. A second level of qualitative coding revealed that many of the participants also valued the continuation of their culture through their communications with others - traits of the desire to feel Cultural Satisfaction.

Participant Leigh made several references within the category of Cultural Satisfaction with very culture-centric responses, including the large percentage of her social media followers that she knows personally. She consciously observes who she connects with online, as reflected in the the statement,

I would say that I know about 95% of my friends on Facebook, about 80% on Twitter and 90% on Instagram.

When asked how many people this participant is friends with on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram she reports:

Facebook: 1798. Twitter - I have two accounts. My personal has... 314...My professional 221. Instagram: 630.”

Also pertinent to Cultural Satisfaction, consider the answer from Kara who said:

I think my personal activism is just a daily like pushback, a daily resistance. A daily part of my life ever since I knew I was not on that side. I am the opposition.

As a participant selected for the study based on high online participation rates and political propensity, this expression is greatly associated with the culture that this participant immerses herself in, frequently and by choice.

Four other participants fall into the category of seeking Cultural Satisfaction by stating that they wanted to find out black news, following black news sources that closely report on black people, and participating in discussions surrounding black issues. Not only did Hannah state:

Black Lives Matter. That’s activism.

She also made the following comment when asked to describe her social media community,

I follow black people. They are the most reliable people. I am black so I follow black people.

Proving that the desire to tailor her social media community as a true reflection of the world around her, Cameron said:

After the results of this election I realized that my social media community was warped and we did not represent the population of this country as a whole. I realized all that I was getting were the views of black America. All the views I follow are ones I agree with, so for me, I actually started following more white people and like Fox News.

When she realized that her social media community was not realistic in comparison to her offline community, she modified it to more acutely evaluate her culture and to satisfy her desire to be more informed. It should be mentioned that Cameron has other cultural values that motivate her to keep a balanced social media community and provide well thought-out posts from her accounts. She believes in providing strong support for her friends and family, even in the online sphere, as reflected when she says:

My family, even if they don't want to hear it, because I'm college educated...I know there are others who look. So when we [black millennials] do have opinions on social media, [I know] what I share has an effect on people who aren't aware and take whatever it is and read it and absorb the information.

#### 3.2.4 Security

Another term largely mentioned in the participants' answers was "safe." While used in different ways, this topic was frequently mentioned by participants as they attempted to explain how they build their communities, particularly when discussing who is in their specific set of social media followers and friends. Avery provided what he needs to feel most comfortable on social media when he said:

I especially make it a point to go to spaces where people feel comfortable expressing their conservative views. [I think] its important to know where people are coming from, what they think. And social media provides some spaces where people are going to be comfortable in ways they're not commonly comfortable.

The desire to find secure spaces online is a common tendency amongst millennials, a group who overwhelmingly desire recognition of individuality and often immerse themselves in social interaction with like-minded others.

In addition to the unique desires of the millennial, this can be seen as an indicator of the desire for black millennials to speak and be themselves without being policed. The human desire for security does not need granular explanation. Instead, black millennials should be observed as a culture of people who seek shelter within their technological devices through comradery and common tongue. Participants interviewed in this study cited social media friends from high school, professional organizations, service work and travels they have taken. Many are people that they have found a common connection with, therefore they chose to connect with them online. If any of those people ever says anything that they do not like, it is as easy as two or three clicks to never hear from that person again.

The security that millennials find in their online communities implies that they are very comfortable with the group of people that they are connected with online and that they do not feel there is as much risk of harm as that in the real world, where the audience nor the speakers are always hand-selected and approved.

Every participant in this study expressed discomfort about being uninformed about current events, with more than half of the participants saying that they turned to social media to specifically

learn about what's going on with black people. Leigh plainly stated what type of news she most commonly looks out for online when she answered:

Black people getting shot.

Despite the existence of livestream news, text updates from applications, Google, and television, eight of the participants in this study said that they go to social media for news. They go to the people they have chosen to hear from to hear the news. Though discussing current events on their social media was slightly less popular of a behavior, six of the participants still said that they did it in some way.

The utopian concept of keeping critics at a screen's length away does not speak to the reality that black millennials face every day. The difficulties of engaging in discussion about current events requires black millennials to weigh the risk of their communities knowing where they stand. On social media, the communities are hand-selected, and black millennials experience a sense in safety, motivating them to participate online in instances where they may not at work, socially or with their families.

### 3.2.5 Monitoring

Throughout the study, participants revealed the different ways that they use social media to perform the monitoring that allows them to feel comfortable in their daily lives. For many, social media provides a way to keep constant tabs on current events, some of which may affect their lives as well. When mentioning that they seek out news about violent acts like shooting or harsh arrests, the participants acknowledged what may be the largest theme in the qualitative portion of this study, monitoring.

A traditional function of the media has been as a watchdog for the masses, transferring important information about what is going on in other places and providing indicators that there is an authority that will step in in the case of injustice or unfairness. America's racial history has denied many black people fair media coverage of the state of black America in realistic and relatable ways for the black community. Social media, however, allows black millennials to access a seemingly all-omniscient news source and social platform all in one, providing them with the opportunity to learn information that otherwise might not make it on to mainstream news.

Their dependence on the monitoring that they can do online provides them with the context that they can operate from as young black people in a constantly shifting political climate. It helps them know about events that influence their actions, their thoughts and the lives of others that look just like them. Sasha states:

I get all my news from social media because the news is lying. Social media gives it to you in real time, honest to God truth.

Throughout the interviews, participants also spoke of the interchangeable nature of many of the tragic stories they hear online and their proximity to having suffered the same fate. When they cannot trust the news, they turn to social media. As the newspaper industry wanes, they turn to social media. And more than anything, they entrust one another to keep the black millennial community informed and abreast of any new information or danger. Sasha also says she often hears:

Bad news. Kidnappings, murder, Trump, terrorist attacks, refugees running. You would think everybody shoots everybody outside.

Leigh elaborates on her own social media monitoring by mentioning that her online community is very active and knowledgeable about current events.

I see a variety of news. I would say there is mostly a mix between pop culture, world and national news. I would say that most of my network on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is very plugged in to what's happening in the world. For the most part the articles shared are from credible sources.

In this instance, it is clear that Leigh uses social media to gather information from sources that she trusts. Her high frequency of social media use reflects her frequent desire to immerse herself in the type of information that she finds online - reflecting a high level of monitoring that a black millennial who log in less do not perform.

Tyrell had an astute memory of current events when asked about the most prominent social media hashtags that he remembers using last year.

#OscarsSoWhite or hashtag "anybody-who-the-police-have-killed." Black Lives Matter sticks out.

In saying this, Derek is also re-iterating his knowledge of pop culture and police violence simply by recalling the hashtags associated with the topics. In fact, pop culture was widely mentioned as a reason that the participants log in. The ever-changing quality of pop culture requires constant monitoring in order to stay up to speed with the latest trends, news about music or videos and pictures of their favorite celebrities.

Black millennials even have defined lengths of time that find appropriate to take in their news, creating the concept of micro-monitoring, a match-up of the millennial attention span and the news they like to ingest. Avery says that he prefers:

Anything that has a nice clean video that's 2 minutes long and draws some sort reaction.

### 3.2.6 Results Referencing Political Activism

Asking about the political activism of the participants for this study garnered many different responses that all referenced behaviors that bring about change or actions that show how much someone supports a cause. Tyrell states that she believes political activism is,

When you support one side and go hard for it. That's what it is. Going hard for what you believe in.

By mentioning that she believes political activism requires "going hard," Sasha is actually articulating that she does not recognize small or passive acts as a form of political activism. She favors pronounced and easily observable ways to promote what she believes in, but doesn't state specifically how this can be accomplished. Participant Leigh feels similarly about political activism and said:

Activism to me is some form of outward form protest to demonstrate your support of some social, political or economic change or justice. This can be done either through verbal action, group events like protests, sit-ins, marches, rallies or written through think pieces or

articles. Even what our generation has coined as “slacktivism” by using the internet to spread awareness about a particular cause. There are also some non-verbal forms of activism that can be done through the use of posters, t-shirts, etc.

In stark contrast, Hannah stated a much more defined scope of political activism by saying

My definition of activism is when you are actively fighting against a cause. Like have meetings and you have a committee and you have people around you, behind you so you can change certain things that you don't feel are justified.

Cameron had no stipulations or finite examples of political activism. Instead, there was space for interpretation in the way that activism can take shape through medium and technique

“I believe activism is when there something that isn't quite right and you take a stance and use whatever talents that you have to progress, explore, educate and disseminate your message to others in order to bring about a change or improve the situation.”

Again, this helps define political activism for black millennials without making the boundaries so restrictive the millennials feel like they cannot function and represent themselves in their own individual ways.

There was not a single participant of this study that did not make mention of political activism as part of their regular online activity. Though associated with different desires that they have to find like-minded people culturally, to feel safe or to talk about issues that matter to them, the importance of social media in their lifestyles makes it nearly impossible to deny that they are

demonstrating politically conscious activity. All have liked a post with a political theme or hashtag, engaged in discussion about current events, researched a politically relevant topic that they had little knowledge on or shared a message that was political in nature. What the participants revealed was an openness to fluid political activism, as long as it informed or influenced others. Even if it did not bring about major change like policy reform, they still mentioned several behaviors that they recognized as politically motivated efforts by their peers.

In their racialized existence, it is rare for a black American millennial to be completely unaware of current events and politics. In times when the events are changing hour by hour, traditional news media cannot keep up with the fast-paced millennial and their keen hunger for the most up-to-date information. Even if the information was provided to them by a friend, the influence that the black millennial gives the people that he or she follows is the permission to build the content streams that they consciously view or absorb.

There is fear that violence could reach their neighborhoods, demand to know the true details of what's happening in the world and a desire to satiate their most human desires. As racialized citizens of the United States, their social media behavior is similar to much of the low-risk protest behavior that has been taking place over centuries. By making choices about the content that they take in, the significance of social media in the political activism of black millennials informs us that black millennials are using modern tools to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors reflective of social movement and political activism on their college campuses, in their cities and all over the country.



#### 4 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to more closely examine the relationship between black millennial social media use and their political activism. The assessment of the black millennials in this study concluded in knowledge about their social media use and integration and their propensity for political activism. In the case of the ten black millennials interviewed for qualitative research, boundaries and limits to what black social media use looks like were set through discussion about culture, community and preferences. As these participants had already scored highly on the quantitative instrument, they were likely to have sound demonstrations of political activism online. Observing these behaviors provided context for the culture of black millennial social media and allowed the researcher to make connections based on the values, attitudes and beliefs of the ten interviewed.

Though just a small portion of black millennial culture, this group showed determination in letting their voices be heard as long as it was in the way that they chose for themselves. This is sign of their status as millennials along with their unique role as black people trying to overcome the tribulations that the social and economic structures of America raised them in. Though their ideas are not always delivered with the accuracy and effect of a professionally-crafted media message, there is good cause to investigate the enhanced trust between many millennial social media users and their social media communities. As digital natives, they have grown up in a world of technology that evolves daily and updates instantaneously. Some platforms are bought out and no longer serve as useful tools for communication, but Twitter, Instagram and Facebook continue to serve black millennial culture as a mechanism for communication within black American culture. Even if political activism could not be demonstrated on social media, black millennials show signs of high integration when it comes to their online platforms. Some feel strange not checking them and others refuse to miss anything so they turn on their notifications and alerts. No matter how

black millennials are using social media, however, it is very much a part of their everyday lifestyle and a large component in their own communications toolkit.

The freedom that black millennials feel when they can participate in political discourse online is an opportunity that they are taking both subtly and in the extreme. With such a wide range of social media activities that can contribute to political activism online, it is relatively easy for the black millennial to participate – all they have to do is log in.

Political activism is rooted in the desire to see change (Sánchez-Villar, Bigné & Aldás-Manzano 2017). The responses from the black millennials interviewed for this study present the multitude of ways that black millennials are satiating their desires through social media (Qureshi, Apolinar Claudio & Méndez 2015). Many want to see changes in the culture of the country around them and use social media as a platform for sending messages. Others want to experience a world where they are surrounded with like-minded people and can continue to build on ideas that have been circulating in the black community for centuries. The use of unique dialect – hashtags and social media terminology – reflect an investment in maintaining the oral tradition of the culture through contemporary tools, making it easy for others to learn, participate and share (Hamza 2016).

The reach of one black millennial's social media network can exceed thousands through both personal and professional ties. Through connections with others in their black Greek letter organizations, from groups they associate with at school or for professional development and their families, they have robust opportunities influence others via communication. By using their indigenous communities online, black millennials have decentralized social movement and spread the power out amongst themselves, forging their own identity (Laraña, Johnston & Gusfield 1994). They willingly influence and are influenced by others every time they log in to their Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. How they use the information that they take in on social media is up to

each individual's desires and what they need to satiate himself or herself as a member of their own culture, family and chosen society.

Defining activism and social movement requires flexibility and clear description of the actions and behaviors that make-up the activism itself. There is no clear measurement and there has not been enough research on the subject of online political activism for there to be a definition after this study. From organizing a protest to circling petitions, tangible evidence of a participant's dedication to a cause have often been some of the most logical measurements of activism. But what happens when we introduce communication that can be broadcast to millions, then deleted within a matter of seconds? How do we qualify the activism that shows up in the great space where social media communities dwell? As so many assumed a defensive position against the freedom of speech in previously social movements that shaped black history, how do we advocate for the anonymous black millennial who is sparking ideas throughout their expansive social networks sometimes reaching over 1,000 people at a time?

As social media continues to weave itself into the lives of the millennial generation, it will continue to influence the ways that future generations learn to communicate with one another. Textbooks have already been created introducing the principles and applications of social media (Sheldon 2015), along with the pedagogy and practice (Langmia 2014). Already, there are books being written about the policies behind that protect your social media posts in the same way that there is a protection of free speech.

Some social media networks are doing their parts to promote free speech on their platforms. At the commencement of this study, Twitter had officially filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security. The American Civil Liberties Union has agreed to represent the person behind the alternative U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, @ALT\_USCIS, Twitter account - protecting their personal information in defense of the First Amendment. Twitter

also protects its users with Fair Use policies similar to the copyrights of traditional media, requiring the value of tweets to be assessed in order to be protected.

As digital natives, millennials are much more likely to send a tweet before they write an article. They are likely to write a Facebook post and include a graphic than pass out fliers in their surrounding area. The examination of their power on social media has to be considered based on all of the tools they have available, their convenience and their reach. Aside from using the three social media outlets examined here, they also have many other platforms at their reach, and large audiences that they facilitate communication. When platforms invest in policies to protect their users, they are doing so based off of frameworks for rights to video clips, newspaper articles and magazine editorials. Not only do they author their posts, but social media continues to regard them as authors of their own content. In truth, social media's trickle-up structure allows black millennials protections similar to those newspapers use to shield their writers and sources- a meaningful shift in news authority.

With all the necessary parts to be a vehicle for the black community to communicate their messages, social media is there for millions to shape and use (Novakovich, Miah & Shaw 2017). As black millennials continue to educate themselves and turn into the educators of the next generation, their fluency in social media will greatly enhance their communicatory skills and innate ability to use the technology around them (Kuntsman & Karatzogianni 2012). Keeping up with social media requires the knowledge of coded dialect, sharing, community. These same traits are also intrinsically tied to culture (Chaoyun, Chi-Cheng, Rothwell & Kuen-Ming 2016). If black millennials would continue to use social media this way, then they will not only be ahead of the curve. They will be in full command and ability to use the digital sphere as the medium that black people can effectively communicate on despite the traditional system of oppression within the media. Their affect and ability to affect will allow them to do this if they continue to talk about

socio-political issues online (Ash 2012). Despite the fact that black people in the United States were dehumanized without the ability to read or write (Johnson 2016), black millennials are now the ones speaking and engaging in the language of their black communities online. They are informing one another of important news using the connections that they have created. Black millennials are experiencing an unprecedented level of access to a major communication network and using it to participate in political activism. Though they integrate the traditions of social movement that came before them, such as employing indigenous networks and resource mobilization (Kane, Alavi, Labianca & Borgatti 2014). They are simply doing it their way, and this study shows how their social media use boosts political activism within the community.

Black millennials use social media in a way individual to their position in the American social and political economy. While some of the black millennials believed that their posts and tweets made little to no impact on their social community, statistically, it is true that increased social media use has a positive correlation with black millennial political activism. Using the Uses and Gratifications framework, connections between the reasons that black millennials are using social media are fueling their satiated states as rational beings. The most significant difference is that though there are millions of people worldwide using social media, black millennials are using it to satiate desires unique to their intersection.

#### 4.1 The Intentionality of Political Activism Amongst Black Millennials

Perhaps one of the most significant findings from this study was the perspective from which black millennials weighed their own political activism, based on their intentionality. Misunderstanding what political activism is can easily be lost in the fast pace of the platform. Signing an online petition mentioned on Facebook is a much more streamlined process than

paper petitioning, but to the participants, it still has the same significance as a politically active behavior.

Black millennial political activism must be allowed to morph and change with technology just as the black political activism that came before it. The main difference is that other generations have accessed today's technologies at different ages, with different technological familiarities and even, with varied experiential opinions about the significance of social media platforms overall. It is very possible that a wide demographic like that of Facebook users could be more dependent on other types of media for their needs. Some are bound to be late-adopters who never fully utilize the platform, and others are liable to trust other forms of communication over social media, influencing the scope of their online activity overall.

Social media was not present when previous movements like Black Power or Civil Rights were current events. At that time, media was socialized around and about - bankrolled by large corporations and primarily orchestrated by white people. Particularly in America, black people have had to be integrated into legitimacy. As the top American ethnographic to use social media, black millennials were given legitimacy as soon as they received their Twitter account confirmation. At any point in time, a post or tweet by a black millennial could go viral, activating all of the protections that platforms have in place. This safety could be why social media seems so boundless when it comes to political activism.

As black millennials continue to socially interact online, do they not then become the newsmakers of their own online sphere? To stop participating in online political behavior, can a millennial not simply turn off their phone? This reveals that political activism is an inherent component of the millennial lifestyle. Combine this with the racialized life of a black American and social media practically has wings of its own as a vehicle for political activism. Analytical processes like the calculation of reach do impact the ripple of the political activism that black

millennials display, but that does not mean that they are not still being politically active. They are participating in political conversation, the exchange of ideas and the distribution of knowledge every time they retweet 140 characters and a politically relevant hashtag.

In fact, instead of comparing black millennial political activism to its more high-risk historical counterparts, study could benefit from the differences between direct and indirect communication within low-risk scenarios. Accurately predicting online scenarios that lead to political activism is difficult, but eliminating the idea that indirect communication does not exist within the realm of online political activism is not. With special symbols and abbreviations that make up its language, it is appropriate to study the other intricacies of social media, including the significance of more passive forms of political awareness like sharing an article or following news sources to receive up-to-date alerts on black news. The decision between collective action or connective action is up to the social media user and always will be, but that does not mean that political activity is at the fingertips of black millennials, and for many, social media serves as a place they can express themselves and engage with others.

#### 4.2 Widening the Examination

This study could have been enhanced in several ways that future study would benefit from exploring. To begin, the participants of this study had the advantage of being exposed to certain levels of technological access as provided to them by their enrollment at Georgia State University. This means that each participant of this study had a monetary investment in Georgia State University through the payment of student fees which cover their on-campus internet access and provides them with the opportunities to frequently use computers and technology. In the future, allowing students who were not found in a university setting could allow the results to more accurately reflect black millennials who are not currently seeking higher education.

Many black millennials have integrated social media into their lives so seamlessly that they may not even notice. Several of the participants in this study were enthusiastic about the idea that they already hold some of the power needed to motivate social change. This hesitance often comes from commentary from previous generations cautioning them of the infinity of the online abyss, lest they get sucked into a danger somewhere in the dark web. The millennial's propensity to "become addicted" to the Internet is no more than previous generations' addictions to news. It is the fact that black millennials have a historically disproportionate opportunity to push an activist agenda that makes them so special. The access that they have to discuss and share on social media with their tailored community embodies the access, reach and authority that many generations of black Americans fought for before them. To honor the traditions of black social movement, the black millennial must be intentional about the community that they are surrounding themselves with to use social media as a vehicle for social change. Meaningful dialogue about any politically-relevant subject has to have willing senders and receivers of information, and equal levels of understanding and dedication to the same cause.

In the future, study about black millennials would best be done with a greater sample to gather data that best represents the group. Surveying more students could have resulted in interviews that were with even more highly engaged social media users with a high propensity for political activism.

In the future, this study could be built upon by gauging the efficacy of past movements in comparison to the social movements that include social media, to get a better idea of exactly how political activism online measures up to the historical political activism of the black community.

#### 4.2.1 Differences within the Millennial Generation

Study on the nuanced differences within the millennial generation would greatly impact the understanding of black millennial political activism. Though hardly longer than a decade, the millennial generation (18-29) shows a spectrum of tendencies that could be associated with within the minimum and maximum ages of the sample. As black millennials aged, it was the researcher's observation that there was more consideration on the type of content that they were reading and viewing. Older millennials also seemed to demonstrate less trust for the information that they took in on social media, and were more prone to research and check sources.

The separation between millennials above and below the age of 25 also included the platforms on which they most relied. To those in their late teens and early twenties, there is a palpable lack of interest in Facebook. Those in their late twenties made many mentions of it still being a very useful and frequently used tool to communicate. More nuanced study of the differences within this generation could lead to statistical data that better quantifies and qualifies the differences in technology amongst millennials themselves. Digital nativity provides millennials with an innate sense of navigating technology, but there could be differences based on age. Consider the technological advancements the world experienced between 1987 and 1999 and it is clear that millennials have even experienced digital nativity differently, from beepers to flip phones to the iPhone 7. Finding differences in the values of millennials as they relate to their position on the millennial spectrum could provide better understanding for the way that they use social media as teenagers and adults.

#### Conclusions: The Impact of Black Millennial Political Activism

Results from the 2016 Presidential Election show us that black millennials age 18-29 represented 3% of the voters (CNN 2016). In terms of the popular vote, black millennials helped

position Hillary Clinton as the chosen candidate for the United States presidency. In a time where many are debating the necessity of the electoral college, this percentage is significant. In fact, the black millennial vote is often on the winning side. This pattern began in October 2009 when Black millennials shifted their focus from the power of the nation's elite to the power in individual and community activism after the election of Barack Obama (Black Youth Project 2016). If black millennials are using social media seek out and satisfy their desires, then it is true that social media serves as their source of surveillance, security, cultural satisfaction, emotional release, habit, social contact, social interaction and more.

As the commanders of an expansive platform for protest and political activism, black millennials have an abundance of political power at their fingertips. The black protest tradition in America taught black millennials why activism is so necessary, and now black millennials can use social media to uphold the that very same tradition with the help of the Internet. There is no other communicatory tool better-suited. The necessity of indigenous networks and leaders within a social movement fits perfectly with the model of social media, where the people contribute to discourse and many who follow can become followers - better informed on current political discussion and better prepared for any future movement that they might want to participate in. The bottom-up news distribution puts closeness and control in the hands of black millennials as the narrators of the world around them. It allows black voices to be heard and to reach corners of the community where we otherwise might not be able to. Social media transcends restrictions of cost and provides black millennials with detail-rich methods of communicating their ideas. Access and equality are two resources that black Americans need desperately. Social media has provided black millennials with the support they needed since many of them were children. Social media allows for fairness in communication facilitation and in the media, where black Americans have historically been left

behind. To ignore what they could accomplish online, especially with the knowledge of the black millennial would be a mistake for all.

The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility that black millennial social media use could be presenting itself as political activism without much recognition. Black millennials are demonstrating actions and behaviors that point to their social media use as a form of political activism. Though it is true that not all black millennials intend for their posts and tweets to become politicized, they often do. As both the senders and receivers of information that can be politicized, it is important for black millennials to understand the importance of their online activity, as we now know how it can influence both themselves and others. At the current rate of adoption, black millennials already outpace all of their counterparts as catalysts of change using technology and social media (Nielsen 2016). Examining their relationship with social media is worthwhile to the advancement of black communities in this country and across the world. Without it, the black community could miss out on an opportunity that could help with the dissemination of diasporic communication everywhere.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## Phase One Instrument

## Activism Orientation Scale (AOS)

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions by circling how likely it is that you will engage in each of the following activities in the future.

Choose from 0-3 based on your behavior being: "Extremely Unlikely," "Unlikely," "Likely," or "Extremely Likely."

Display a poster or bumper sticker with a political message?

a. 0 1 2 3

Invite a friend to attend a meeting of a political organization or event?

a. 0 1 2 3

Purchase a poster, t-shirt, etc. that endorses a political point of view?

a. 0 1 2 3

Serve as an officer in a political organization?

a. 0 1 2 3

Engage in a political activity in which you knew you will be arrested?

a. 0 1 2 3

Attend an informational meeting of a political group?

a. 0 1 2 3

Organize a political event (e.g. talk, support group, march)?

a. 0 1 2 3

Give a lecture or talk about a social or political issue?

a. 0 1 2 3

Go out of your way to collect information on a social or political issue?

a. 0 1 2 3

Campaign door-to-door for a political candidate?

a. 0 1 2 3

Present facts to contest another person's social or political statement?

a. 0 1 2 3

Donate money to a political candidate?

a. 0 1 2 3

Vote in a non-presidential federal, state, or local election?

a. 0 1 2 3

Engage in a physical confrontation at a political rally?

a. 0 1 2 3

Send a letter or e-mail expressing a political opinion to the editor of a periodical or television show?

a. 0 1 2 3

Engage in a political activity in which you feared that some of your possessions would be damaged?

a. 0 1 2 3

- Engage in an illegal act as part of a political protest?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Confront jokes, statements, or innuendoes that opposed a particular group's cause?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Boycott a product for political reasons?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Distribute information representing a particular social or political group's cause?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Engage in a political activity in which you suspect there would be a confrontation with the police or possible arrest?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Send a letter or email about a political issue to a public official?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Attend a talk on a particular group's social or political concerns?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Attend a political organization's regular planning meeting?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Sign a petition for a political cause?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Encourage a friend to join a political organization?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Try to change a friend's or acquaintance's mind about a social or political issue?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Block access to a building or public area with your body?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Donate money to a political organization?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Try to change a relative's mind about a social or political issue?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Wear a t-shirt or button with a political message?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Keep track of the views of members of Congress regarding an issue important to you?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Participate in discussion groups designed to discuss issues or solutions of a particular social or political group?  
a. 0 1 2 3
- Engage in any political activity in which you fear for your personal safety?  
a. 0 1 2 3

**Social Media Use and Integration (SMUIS): Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale**  
**Instructions:** Please respond to the following questions by circling how frequently you engage in each of the following activities using the numbered responses below:

- Never (0)
- Once a month (1)
- Several times a month (2)
- Once a week (3)

- Several times a week (4)
- Once a day (5)
- Several times a day (6)
- Once an hour (7)
- Several times an hour (8)

Read e-mail on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Get directions or use GPS on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Browse the web on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Listen to music on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Take pictures using a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Check the news on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Record video on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Use apps (for any purpose) on a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Search for information with a mobile phone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Watch TV shows, movies, etc. on a computer.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Watch video clips on a computer.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Download media files from other people on a computer.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Share your own media files on a computer.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Search the Internet for news on any device.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Search the Internet for information on any device.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Search the Internet for videos on any device.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Search the Internet for images or photos on any device.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

How often do you do each of the following activities on social networking sites such as Facebook?

Check your Facebook page or other social networks.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Check your Facebook page from your smartphone.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Post status updates.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Post photos.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Browse profiles and photos.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Read postings.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Comment on postings, status updates, photos, etc.

a. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

## APPENDIX B

### Phase Two Interview Questions

1. What is your definition of activism?
2. What is your preferred method of discussing current events?
3. How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?
4. How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?
5. How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?
6. How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?
7. How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?
8. What type of news do you often see on social media?
9. What topics do you like discussing on social media?
10. What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?
11. Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?
12. How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?
13. If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?
14. If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

## APPENDIX C

Georgia State University  
Department of African American Studies  
Informed Consent - Phase One

Do The Police Know We Have the Microphone?  
Principal Investigator: Jonathan Gayles  
Student Principal Investigator: Janessa Bailey

### Purpose

You have been invited to take part in a research study. This form has important information about the reason for the study, what you will do, and the way the information you provide will be used after the study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the political activism of black millennials aged 18-29 and social media use. A total number of 200 participants will be recruited for this study. The goal is to gather information about your experience with black social media and to collect data about your social media use, attitudes and political behaviors. This study will take no more than 30 minutes for Phase One. If you are asked to participate in Phase Two of the study, it will take no more than two hours to complete the interview. Phase Two of the study will be audio-recorded.

### Procedures

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take a survey lasting no more than 30 minutes. Once the survey is complete, the researcher will score your survey, and could reach out to you for an in-person interview lasting no longer than two hours. Interviews will be conducted in person and will be audio-recorded.

Online participation can be done anywhere the participant is comfortable and has a reliable Internet connection. Phase Two will be completed in the Georgia State University Library in March 2017. Participants will only interact with the Student Principal Investigator.

### Risks

There are few, minor risks associated with this research study. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering certain questions. If you feel uncomfortable with a question or procedure, you can skip that question/procedure or withdraw from the study altogether.

### Benefits

You can benefit from this study by sharing your experiences and voicing your own opinions about social media and your own techniques of activism. Once the study is complete, you can also benefit from reflecting on your actions in the online sphere and examining their impact. Results from this study could be used to benefit entire communities or groups of activists, in the form of gained cultural knowledge and insight on the advocacy that can stem from social media.

### Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

If you choose to be in this study, you have the right to be treated with respect, including respect for your decision whether or not you wish to continue or stop being in the study. You are free to stop being in the study at any time. Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Janessa Bailey and Jonathan Gayles will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) We will use a study number and your initials rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with any documents containing pseudonyms in a separate locked filing cabinet in another office. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally. Audio recordings will be destroyed after pseudonym transcription.

### Contact Persons:

Contact Jonathan Gayles at [jgayles@gsu.edu](mailto:jgayles@gsu.edu) or by phone at 404-413-5142 or Janessa Bailey at [jbailey62@gsu.edu](mailto:jbailey62@gsu.edu) or by phone at 636-234-4823 if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu) if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

### Consent

Please save or print a copy of this for your records. If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please click 'agree' to continue with the survey.

## APPENDIX D

Georgia State University  
Department of African American Studies  
Informed Consent - Phase Two

Do The Police Know We Have the Microphone?  
Principal Investigator: Jonathan Gayles  
Student Principal Investigator: Janessa Bailey

### Purpose

You have been invited to take part in a research study. This form has important information about the reason for the study, what you will do, and the way the information you provide will be used after the study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the political activism of black millennials aged 18-29 and social media use. A total number of 200 participants will be recruited for this study. The goal is to gather information about your experience with black social media and to collect data about your social media use, attitudes and political behaviors. Phase Two of this study will take no more than two hours to complete the interview. Phase Two of the study will be audio-recorded.

### Procedures

In Phase Two of this study, the researcher will conduct an in-person interview lasting no longer than two hours. Interviews will be conducted in person and will be audio-recorded. Interview questions will focus on attitudes and behaviors towards social media.

Phase Two will be completed in the Georgia State University Library in March 2017. Participants will only interact with the Student Principal Investigator.

### Risks

There are few, minor risks associated with this research study. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering certain questions. If you feel uncomfortable with a question or procedure, you can skip that question/procedure or withdraw from the study altogether.

### Benefits

You can benefit from this study by sharing your experiences and voicing your own opinions about social media and your own techniques of activism. Once the study is complete, you can also benefit from reflecting on your actions in the online sphere and examining their impact. Results from this study could be used to benefit entire communities or groups of activists, in the form of gained cultural knowledge and insight on the advocacy that can stem from social media.

### Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

If you choose to be in this study, you have the right to be treated with respect, including respect for your decision whether or not you wish to continue or stop being in the study. You are free to stop being in the study at any time. Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### Confidentiality

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Janessa Bailey and Jonathan Gayles will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) We will use a study number and your initials rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with any documents containing pseudonyms in a separate locked filing cabinet in another office. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally. Audio recordings will be destroyed after pseudonym transcription.

### Contact Persons:

Contact Jonathan Gayles at [jgayles@gsu.edu](mailto:jgayles@gsu.edu) or by phone at 404-413-5142 or Janessa Bailey at [jbailey62@gsu.edu](mailto:jbailey62@gsu.edu) or by phone at 636-234-4823 if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu) if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

### Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio-recorded, please sign below.

-----  
Subject's Name (printed) and Signature

-----  
Date

-----  
Researcher's Name (printed) and Signature

-----  
Date

## APPENDIX E

### PHASE TWO TRANSCRIPTS

#### LEIGH

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

LEIGH: Activism to me is some form of outward form protest to demonstrate your support of some social, political or economic change or justice. This can be done either through verbal action, group events like protests, sit-ins, marches, rallies or written through think pieces or articles. Even what our generation has coined as “slacktivism” by using the internet to spread awareness about a particular cause. There are also some non-verbal forms of activism that can done through the use of posters, t-shirts, etc.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

LEIGH: I usually prefer communicating current events between peers/friends in person or via direct communication like texts or even a group chat with a small group of trusted friends. Usually, though, I find speaking in person can be more meaningful

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

LEIGH: I would say my social media communities are varied. I have a mix of friends that I’m still actually in contact with on a regular basis, family who mostly live overseas and acquaintances I’ve met along the way. Most of them are fairly active on social media and I would say most are engaged in current events from celebrity to political and everything else in between.

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

LEIGH: Can I check my phone?

Interviewer: Yes

LEIGH: Facebook: 1798. Twitter...I have 2 accounts. The personal - 314, professional 221.  
Instagram: 630

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter?  
Instagram?

LEIGH: I would say that I know about 95% of my friends on Facebook, about 80% on Twitter and 90% on Instagram.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

LEIGH: I would say I have only one or two of my followers that I have had conversations with online that I haven’t met in person.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

LEIGH: I don't have regular/frequent interactions with anyone that I've never met in person.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

LEIGH: I typically see a variety of news. I would say there is mostly a mix between pop culture, world and national news and articles related to my profession via my professional Twitter account. I would say that most of my network on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is very plugged into what's happening in the world. I will say for the most part the articles shared are from credible sources. However, there are a few that require additional research on my own. I also use my professional Twitter primarily to connect with others in my field, I will occasionally come across political articles on my feed however, it usually tech articles, marketing articles or anything related to web development and new technologies.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

LEIGH: I honestly prefer to talk about things related to web development and things related to my field of work. I find talking about most anything else on social media, especially with strangers can be filled with non-sensical retorts. Additionally, topics like politics are so volatile and most things like humor are hard to pick up via a written message, unless you have a prior relationship with that person. I like talking about things in my field because typically people are willing to provide advice or even technical help. Also, they are usually talking about new trends and can give great insights on them.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

LEIGH: #blacklivesmatter, #girlswhocode, #blackgirlscode

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

LEIGH: I do pay attention about half of them. The things that usually grab my attention are either the things that might be more inflammatory or in depth think pieces about current events. I've also found that social media and the sharing of political opinions have given me some positive but mostly negative insight on people that I have known for year. What I do find interesting is that, over the last election I've discovered that people I would have considered great acquaintances even somewhat friends had some unfavorable views of the world and politics.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

LEIGH: I think it's perfectly acceptable for someone to express their opinions via social media. At the end of the day, it is their account and how they choose to use it is up to them. It can be overwhelming, even a bit, annoying when someone's entire page on social media consists of just political views or rhetoric, regardless of party affiliation. I think the perfect social media account is

a mix of political opinions, pop culture, sharing viral videos and bit of humor. Too much of one, can be overwhelming.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

LEIGH: I don't necessarily think social media has increased my political knowledge but it has encouraged me to be more diligent about gaining that knowledge on my own. There is so much misinformation spread out there, I feel like not equipping myself and doing research on my own would mean that I could be easily swayed or easily coerced.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

LEIGH: I do think that sharing and engaging in socio-political discussions on social media does have an impact. While I do think that it may be minimal, I think that if I do share an article or status that is opposite of someone that I am friends with, that it may lead to them thinking about that particular topic in different light or from a different perspective. I have had one significant engagement where someone expressed an opinion that was factually inaccurate and we were able to have an intellectual discourse about it and from that conversation, he said that he would do his own fact checking and have his own conversations with people he knew in person who were more knowledgeable in the topic than he was. From that conversation, he later came back and said that through our conversation, he learned a lot and I had encouraged a change of opinion and world view.

## HANNAH

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

HANNAH: my definition of activism is when you are actively fighting against a cause. Like have meetings and you have a committee and you have people around you, behind you so you can change certain things that you don't feel are justified. Like violence against black people. That's activism. Black lives matter, that's activism.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

HANNAH: I can't say that I have a preferred method of discussing current events because I can say that I do not seek to discuss current events. That's something that depends on what it is but I don't have a preferred method, if I would choose to do so it would be in a real-life setting. Nothing too formal.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

HANNAH: I'm not sure what that means. Black Twitter? I follow black people. They are the most reliable people. I am black, so I follow black people.

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

I don't know how many I have on Facebook because I haven't looked since high school. Twitter? I follow about 450 if I had to guess. Instagram doesn't really matter because I don't use it. I don't really know.

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

HANNAH: This question would have been best asked when I was in high school. I can't really say that I met a lot of people on the internet that I communicate with but I still know them in person.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

HANNAH: I can't really say that I met a lot of people on the Internet that I communicate with, but I still know them in person. Like I'm not communicating with people not at all even once or twice that I don't know in person.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

HANNAH: I try not to. That's weird.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

HANNAH: News related to black people I think is the majority of my consumption. That's usually the topic.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

HANNAH: Mmm. It depends on if something is trending or if its something I find funny. Funny hashtags, something like that. Nothing too intense.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

HANNAH: Stuff about tv and music. Anything related to tv and music anything else not really.

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

HANNAH: NO.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

HANNAH: I don't. The only thing I discuss is when its with friends and when it naturally comes out but it's not really my jam.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

HANNAH: A lot, because I don't care. I feel like I see it, but when I see it on Twitter it's at a level where I can understand it. I know what's going on because its people who are out there who are knowledgeable about politics and they put it in its most basic form. I like that.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

HANNAH: It can, but when people try to force it, it's not really my thing.

### SHAUNA

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

SHAUNA: The process of bringing about change by way of informing people of an issue.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

SHAUNA: In person, one on one or small groups

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

SHAUNA: People I went to school with or met through people I went to school with in the past. Celebrities and random lifestyle bloggers or "influencers".

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

SHAUNA: On twitter I have 719 followers, on Instagram I have 912 followers and idk how many friends I have on facebook, probably an insane amount and theyre mostly probably strangers that I added in college and never deleted. Oh I don't have that many. I have 1453. Maybe I have cleaned it out.

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

SHAUNA: Well it has to be hundreds.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person? Very few, if any

SHAUNA: Facebook: I've met them all in person at least once, some of them I haven't seen in over over 15 years though. Insta: I've met every one of my followers, about 65% of the people I

follow.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

SHAUNA: Everything from politics to new makeup releases

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

SHAUNA: Everything from politics to new makeup releases

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

SHAUNA: I can't recall one that really stood out

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

SHAUNA: Yes

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

SHAUNA: I think everyone has a right to do it, but I honestly usually skip it if I have a suspicion that I'll disagree. I will "like" something that I agree with.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

SHAUNA: I try not to rely on social media for "news". But it does confirm my thoughts about some people

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

SHAUNA: I don't do it often enough for me to think it impacts anyone

## KARA

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

KARA: I think my personal activism is just a daily like pushback, a daily resistance. A daily part of my life ever since I knew I was not on that side. I am the opposition.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

KARA: I don't usually talk about current events unless someone else brings them up. Not my

thing to inject my opinions more than a few tweets, ya know?

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

KARA: I know most of the people or they are like, friends of friends. It's nobody crazy. Celebrities that I like. Rihanna. People who like Rihanna!

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

KARA: I have no idea. Am I supposed to keep track of that kind of thing?

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

KARA: I don't know how many Facebook followers I have. Hopefully more with my account for my business. Twitter is just, you know, people I know of people I know. I don't know. A couple hundred? I don't think more than four hundred. Instagram. No clue.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

KARA: Quite a few but I also get referrals for people who want me to do their hair so I actually encourage and like that.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

KARA: Like I said, hopefully quite a few since I want to attract new customers to my business.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

KARA: I like seeing the different looks that people serve. I like seeing their posts about funny stuff like those little stories they tell with a lot of tweets in a row. I watch a lot of little videos that make me laugh and I like music and get music news online. Especially from social media.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

KARA: That's not really my thing.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

KARA: I remember the ones with names like #FreeBresha or #TamirRice.

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

KARA: Not at all. Moving on.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

KARA: I don't really do it. I don't want to argue with people and people love to argue.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

KARA: It does help me get more facts, you know? And sometimes I like hearing from other people that I know are smart and paying attention when I'm not.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

KARA: If the right person is speaking at the right time. It's always a possibility.

### LEAH

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

LEAH: The process of bringing about change by way of informing people of an issue

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

LEAH: I usually prefer communicating current events between peers/friends in person or via direct communication like texts or even a group chat with a small group of trusted friends... speaking in person can be more meaningful just because non-verbal cues such as sarcasm or body language can aid in a difficult topic of discussion.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

LEAH: People I went to school with or met through people I went to school with in the past. Celebrities and random lifestyle bloggers or "influencers".

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

LEAH: Facebook= 454, Instagram=166 followers, 277 following; not active on Twitter

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

LEAH: Facebook: I've met them all in person at least once, some of them I haven't seen in over 15 years though. Insta: I've met every one of my followers, about 65% of the people I follow.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

LEAH: Very few, if any.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

LEAH: None

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

LEAH: Everything from politics to new makeup releases.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

LEAH: I usually don't take part in discussions on social media actually. Not worth it to me.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

LEAH: #blacklives matter I guess. No others really stand out.

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

LEAH: Yes.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

LEAH: I think everyone has a right to do it, but I honestly usually skip it if I have a suspicion that I'll disagree. I will "like" something that I agree with.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

LEAH: I try not to rely on social media for "news". But it does confirm my thoughts about some people.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

LEAH: I don't do it often enough for me to think it impacts anyone.

## RYAN

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

RYAN: Activism is taking part in making some kind of difference whether it is locally or in the world. You can do a lot of things to be an activist like demonstrate or help support a cause. It

doesn't have to be like being at the front of a protest. You can pass out water at the protest too because you care about the people and their message.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

RYAN: I will say things on Facebook sometimes because I know people will want to talk about it. It's nice knowing there are all those people with different opinions and it's kind of fun when I'm bored. But sometimes it's just dumb and I wish I hadn't said anything at all.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

RYAN: Facebook: 753. Twitter: oh wow, 2,801. Instagram: 659.

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

RYAN: I try to know all of them. I do a lot of deletes but now that I've seen these numbers I know that I don't actually know all those people in person.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

RYAN: Meeting people online is super easy so I'd say a lot. Glad this doesn't count for dating apps like Tinder! That would be crazy. But I used to know everybody in like middle school but now that I'm in college

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

RYAN: Not a lot I hope, but honestly I don't know.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

RYAN: All types of stuff happening to black people. Wild stuff. Of course, I see stuff about my my line sisters and my sorority but I can also see what's going on with my friends at other schools. Lots of stuff about Trump that I don't like so I don't really try to pay attention, but I know it's there. That stuff stresses me out.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

RYAN: Anything but the President. I'm done with that.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

RYAN: Ummm #blackgirlmagic and #blackboyjoy. Then there were the #blackouts. I like those because people were posting their best selfies. On Women's March day, I remember seeing that

hashtag a lot too.

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

RYAN: A little, but I try not to take too much of it in because it stresses me out. I learn but I don't necessarily take it all to heart.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

RYAN: They took debate out of school which is one of the necessary things we need to defend your point to the extent that you actually listen to someone else's point. Sometimes when I'm online, I don't know who to listen to because I feel like everyone is just shouting to be heard.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

RYAN: I think it has a lot of impact because it's the top place that I get my information from. So it's like if I'm learning new stuff, it must have some kind of impact.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

RYAN: I don't know if I can say that for sure but considering what you just asked me, I guess so.

## AVERY

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

AVERY: Talking about what you care about or what you want to see different in the world. It can be something big like a protest or even sometimes something small like just talking to somebody about a passion.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

AVERY: I actually like talking about them in person but there have been times when I started a conversation based on something I saw online. Like if I want to pick my friends' brains about something that I just read about on Twitter, I'll just bring it up. Usually they've seen it too and we can have a decent conversation.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

AVERY: Lots of people here from Georgia State and from back home. Twitter is a mix and I think Instagram is probably the place where I have the most random people. I'm okay with that though because that means they are finding my page. That's cool.

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

EVERY: I don't pay attention to the number but I do get notifications when I get new friend requests. I like to see what people are finding me online.

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

EVERY: No idea. Not important. However many I have from high school, camps, study groups. Then there are celebrities and companies that give me updates like ESPN.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

EVERY: Probably quite a few. Never really thought about it. I liked adding cute girls when I was younger though.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

EVERY: That number seems too big to count. It's a lot. I don't think people count that as much anymore.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

EVERY: I follow current news about what black people are doing right now.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

EVERY: Sports, who's the best rapper and music stuff. I like to hear about new music videos or concerts and talk about how good the lineups are. There's regular stuff that people be asking like questions that need answers or people who are just looking for reactions. I do like to laugh at funny videos on there. People be acting stupid and it makes me laugh in the middle of the day. I usually comment on those with emojis.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

EVERY: There was #BlackLivesMatter and then there was #SandraBland. I also like #BlackGirlMagic because the girls were fine!

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

EVERY: A little bit. I like to know what my mom is thinking and all my aunties. They always have something to say. The fam comments on politics and what's going on locally and that is nice for the information.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts

through posts or discussions?

EVERY: I don't like it so much when it's real obvious but I like reading some people's ideas. It makes me think.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

EVERY: I learn so much from social media man. The regular news is boring and otherwise politics are kind of boring too but when people talk about it on Twitter I get it more. It's like way easier to understand and makes it lighter and funnier.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

EVERY: I mean, I think I have some impact. People like me. I get likes. Is that impact if they are liking and retweeting my posts? I mean I don't know how else I could impact them.

## TYRELL

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

TYRELL: When you support one side and go hard for it. That's what it is. Going hard for what you believe in.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

TYRELL: I don't like to have arguments so I really try not to. When I see people in those crazy fights in the comments, I always wonder why they started talking about it on social media. They know somebody is going to want to disagree with them just because, so why even bother?

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

TYRELL: They are people I know from around school or from back in Chicago. They are mostly cool but it's not like I know everybody's Mom and Dad or anything. I have funny folks and smart folks and lots of people who talk about stuff I like, which I guess is why they are on my timeline.

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

TYRELL: Who knows? Who cares? I mean I know it's a lot but I don't keep track anymore. I used to when I was younger because I thought it was a big deal but now I realize that I don't even know a lot of people's names.

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

TYRELL: I'd say a couple hundred on each one. More on Facebook because that is the account I've had the longest. I used to keep track of that kind of thing but now it's kind of lame. Unless you're really famous, having a whole bunch of follower isn't something you can brag about. Bragging about being Twitter famous is corny.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

TYRELL: Uhhhhhh. Probably a lot. I let whoever follow me and I follow back people if they just look interesting or if we have any other connections. I figure if my friends are friends with them they can't be a Catfish or anything.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

TYRELL: Hopefully not many!

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

TYRELL: I follow a lot of sports accounts. I love sports so that makes sense. I think that it's cool when my favorite players post something. Other than that, I see things about black people in the news. Especially when they are killed.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

TYRELL: Music, sports, random gossip, events and check-ins.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

TYRELL: #OscarsSoWhite or hashtag "anybody-who-the-police-have-killed." Black Lives Matter sticks out.

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

TYRELL: Kind of, but reading comprehension is at an all-time low. Critical thinking is not what it used to be. That's annoying.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

TYRELL: I like tweeting about podcasts that influence me, and then providing [them] as a resource for people.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

TYRELL: I get most of my news from there so I guess a lot. If I hear anything about Trump or

politics, it's from social media. It's kind of a drag to talk about with my friends, but I figure I can at least stay up to date with stuff since it moves really fast these days. I just never know what's going to happen so I check it pretty often so I don't get lost.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

TYRELL: Maybe. I've posted something before and my friend talked to me about it. Does that count? Like when somebody says that they saw that you reposted or shared something, does that count?

I don't like, post those long posts or anything though. Those are wack. Get a blog or call your mom.

### SASHA

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

SASHA: Activism is like marching or fighting for what's right. When you do things like help voting drives or help someone run for office, I think that is political activism. It doesn't have to be a huge thing all the time, I guess. Like maybe when I wear a sticker after I vote that's activism because then other people think about voting, you know?

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

SASHA: Sometimes I'll talk about them after I read a good article online. If I can link to Twitter or Facebook, I can usually get lots of RTs and a few new followers.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

SASHA: I feel like there are some people that I follow that I don't actually follow. Like they just keep getting retweeted by other people so it seems like I'm following them. That's weird.

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

SASHA: On Facebook I think I have around 1,000. Twitter I have close to 2,000 and Instagram I don't know. Maybe five or six hundred?

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

SASHA: I think I knew most of them when I first joined and now I know a smaller amount. They start you off by making connections with people you know so I think that's why. Then after that it becomes a friend of a friend or someone you see retweeted all the time and so you just add them anyways. Some people just always have funny pictures or hilarious threads so I want to follow them and laugh.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

SASHA: Probably a lot if 'meeting' means that we've talked or exchanged some messages. I don't mind talking to people on my timeline if I want to. We must have added each other for some reason so I don't think I have to be scared. I can always block them.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

SASHA: I don't think I do that at all. That seems odd even though I guess I'm the one who accepted them back as friends. Probably when I was younger.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

SASHA: Bad news. Kidnappings, murder, Trump, terrorist attacks, refugees running. You would think everybody shoots everybody outside.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

SASHA: I try to keep it light. I like hair, funny videos, puppies and commenting on my friends' photos.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

SASHA: #blacklivesmatter, #impeachtrump, #sayhername, #blackboyjoy, b#lackgirlmagic, hundreddollardate

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

SASHA: Barely. But I do delete people who don't know what they're talking about and continue to blast their craziness all over the place. That can go.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

SASHA: I don't mind it, but I don't do it often. There is so much drama that comes with posting about politics on social media, especially Facebook. I mostly just observe unless someone asks me something directly. I hate when people drag me into something stupid.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

SASHA: I get all my news from social media because the other news is lying. Social media gives it to you in real time, honest to God truth.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

SASHA: People like to ask me things because they know I like politics so I guess so. If they are asking me for my opinion I guess it's because they want to hear it.

### CAMERON

Interviewer: What is your definition of activism?

CAMERON : I believe activism is when there something that isn't quite right and you take a stance and use whatever talents that you have to progress, explore, educate and disseminate your message to others in order to bring about a change or improve the situation." Again, this helps define political activism for black millennials without making the boundaries so restrictive the millennials feel like they cannot function and represent themselves in their own individual ways.

Interviewer: What is your preferred method of discussing current events?

CAMERON : I don't mind doing it online but I don't seek it out. Sometimes you can get caught up in a lot of drama on there and I don't like that.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social media communities (friends, followers and people you follow)?

CAMERON : My social media communities are made up people I've met along the way as I've moved from place to place. There are a lot of people from my hometown and then others from places I've lived or visited.

Interviewer: How many friends do you have on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

CAMERON : That's not important to me. It's important to me that whoever is following me takes what I have to say seriously. I have blocked some friends who did not seem to.

Interviewer: How many of your Facebook friends do you know in person? Twitter? Instagram?

CAMERON : At least 50%, but I can't tell which ones because I met them mostly when I was young and now I don't remember what they look like.

Interviewer: How many people have you met online that you have never met in person?

CAMERON: Not a lot. It is weird to me when people do that. Like, why did you add me? Most of the people who add me and don't know me never talk to me.

Interviewer: How many people do you regularly interact with online that you have never met in person?

CAMERON: Like I said, not many.

Interviewer: What type of news do you often see on social media?

CAMERON: After the results of this election I realized that my social media community was warped and we did not represent the population of this country as a whole. I realized all that I was getting were the views of black America. All the views I follow are ones I agree with, so for me, I actually started following more white people and like Fox News.

Interviewer: What topics do you like discussing on social media?

CAMERON: Sometimes I tweet my prayers when I need support from my friends. I comment on what's going on around the city too.

Interviewer: What are the most prominent hashtags you remember seeing on social media in the last year?

CAMERON: I don't know if this was last year, but do you remember that Paula Dean one with the food. It was saying that different sides and foods tasted like slavery and all kinds of racist stuff after she was found out to be...well....racist.

Interviewer: Do you pay attention to the political opinions of others on social media?

CAMERON: Yes I do.

Interviewer: How do you feel about expressing your political views on your social media accounts through posts or discussions?

CAMERON: It's not my favorite thing.

Interviewer: If any, what kind of impact do you think social media has on your political knowledge?

CAMERON: I think I impact my family, even if they don't want to hear it, because I'm college educated...I know there are others who look. So when we [black millennials] do have opinions on social media, [I know] what I share has an effect on people who aren't aware and take whatever it is and read it and absorb the information.

Interviewer: If any, do you feel like engaging in socio-political discussions or sharing your socio-political opinions on social media has an impact on others?

CAMERON : Maybe a little bit. I don't know. I get some likes when I post, but I'm not sure if people are like, talking about what I was talking about to their friends when they get off Facebook or anything.

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