THREE YEARS AFTER TRAYVON MARTIN’S DEATH: IS POLITICAL ALIENATION SHIFTING ACROSS DISPARATE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP RESIDENTS OF SANFORD, FLORIDA?

By

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To Csaba Osvath, my adored husband.
Gladys Liles, my magical grandmother.
Fonda and Thomas Newport, my generous parents.
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THREE YEARS AFTER TRAYVON MARTIN’S DEATH: IS POLITICAL ALIENATION SHIFTING ACROSS DISPARATE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP RESIDENTS OF SANFORD, FLORIDA?

By

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This critical race study examines the time period three years after the death of Trayvon Martin, a Black Florida teenager, who was killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, a partly Hispanic adult male, in 2012, the intense media coverage it inspired, and the disparate shifts in political alienation among the three primary racial and ethnic groups in the Sanford area, Blacks, Hispanics and Latinos, and Whites. Political alienation is a social condition defined by an individual’s feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and despair within a political system. Political alienation is normatively seen as unhelpful in a democratic system because it fosters distrust and separation from government. When people feel politically supported in a particular system, they accept and obey laws and they trust leaders to act boldly on their behalf to enact policies. Significantly, political alienation can signal conflicts between groups or perceptions that one minority group is in greater favor with the ruling power structure.

Although political alienation is a concept studied extensively in sociology and political science, it is rarely applied to mass communication research and media studies. Similarly, mass communication research tends to focus on the coverage of an event and seldom examines the aftermath of an intensely covered, potentially transformative media event, such as the Trayvon
Martin shooting and the subsequent legal proceedings following Martin’s death. Thus, this seminal qualitative study in communications, employing extensive fieldwork techniques and in-depth interviews, offers the potential to expand academic knowledge of political alienation in a rarely examined situation: how the residents of a geographic community at ground zero of a national news event and a national social movement, Black Lives Matter, interact three years later.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

ERIC DEGGANS: [After the George Zimmerman verdict] “In some ways, the circus is in town, man. Protests, threats of boycott, people saying this never should have been to trial, in the first place, all of it is a reaction to the frustration that comes from not being able to really know what sparked the fight between these two people. And, and, that means we can't really put it in context. I mean, the word ‘thug’ is becoming a polite way of saying the ‘N-word.’ They’re describing a certain type of black person who they feel is young, prone to violence and crime. Some people feel their vision of what a thug is and what a thug means has been confirmed by a court, and now they have a right to be suspicious of people like Trayvon Martin” (On the Media, 2013).

On Feb. 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black 17-year-old boy, was fatally shot at 7:16 p.m. in Sanford, Florida. Wearing a dark “hoodie” and carrying a bag of Skittles in his pocket, Martin was walking from a store to the home of his father’s fiancée, who lived in Retreat at Twin Lakes, through a gated community. Recent home invasions prompted neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman to confront the teenager, an altercation a police dispatch officer had warned Zimmerman to avoid after he reported a suspicious, “out of place” character. Zimmerman, a partly Hispanic adult male, said Martin appeared to be “up to no good.” Zimmerman failed to heed the advice to avert confrontation.

Minutes later, police arrived at the Retreat at Twin Lakes after a 911 call from a witness tipped them off about a fight – a call that recorded cries for help and the sound of a gunshot. Martin was pronounced dead at the scene while Zimmerman nursed bloody head injuries, saying he was attacked by the teen and shot Martin out of self-defense. On July 13, 2013, a jury acquitted Zimmerman on all charges, including second-degree murder and manslaughter (Deggans, 2012; Kaduce & Davis, 2013; Prieto, 2012; Stutzman, 2012).

While Florida news media solely covered the story for 10 days following the shooting,
the Pew Research Center (2012) reported the story after Reuters published the news story. Coverage of Trayvon’s shooting was intensified by national news media and social media for nearly 20 months. Armstrong (2013) and Liebler (2010) describe news media’s intensified national reporting during a violent crime case as intense media coverage. The location was also significant, due to Sanford’s geographic location in central Florida, with a community of 56,002, which 2013 data estimated was 45 percent White, 30 percent Black and 20 percent Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The racial/ethnic composition of the community was salient in the criminal case, and in the overall shooting incident, and offers potential for examining how those three groups relate today in the aftermath of Martin’s death and Zimmerman’s acquittal.

The heavy news coverage for the 19 months between the shooting and the jury’s verdict was in part because of the combustible mixture of race, criminality, and politics in a distinctive locale. In his defense, Zimmerman did not assert Florida’s Stand Your Ground law, which relieves defendants of the burden of retreating before using deadly force. This Florida law, the first in the nation to allow defendants to stand their ground, was the subject of considerable reportage and commentary. As Deggans (2012) recalled, weeks after the shooting there was one known fact, that “a young black teen was dead and the man who killed him hadn’t been arrested” (p. 17). News outlets, both local and national, were relentless about telling the story from the night of the shooting through the verdict of the racially-charged case when Zimmerman was acquitted.

Stressful settings in news coverage and unfamiliar terrain may be a causal link to how people think and react in stereotypical ways, reflecting current racial tensions and racial ideologies among minority and majority group members, news producers, and consumers alike (Johnson, Dolan, Reppen, & Johnson, 2010). Furthermore, race-relations and racial ideologies
under tension of a racialized news event can be impacted by news media messages (Johnson, Dolan, Reppen, & Johnson, 2010). Van Deburg (1992) asserted that historically, Whites have striven to make Blacks invisible and to obstruct them politically and economically. This becomes ever so clear at the onset of a racialized news event, such as Martin’s death. It motivated Blacks, locally and nationally, to take a stand against senseless violence, like that which occurred in the 1960s, and helped to mobilize their collective voices via the Black Lives Matter social movement, which has been covered extensively since Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

Additionally, the intense media coverage of the story was documented by Pew Research Center (2012) to be “exploding” in traditional news media, on Twitter, and in blog posts, weeks after the fatal shooting. Subsequently, news media moved into the relatively small town of Sanford, and they stayed through August 2013, covering the State of Florida v. George Zimmerman trial (Deggans, 2012; Weigel, 2013). Popular and scholarly debates over the “Stand Your Ground” (SYG) law also intensified, linking race, criminality, socio-economics, and the law’s social meaning, related impact, and politics (Coker, 2014). However, at the center of the news media coverage and of the trial was how race was evidence for criminality, a frequent echo in the news those months describing Trayvon’s “out of place” appearance and Zimmerman’s perceived fear of such a supposed intruder (Kaduce & Davis, 2013; Kuhn & Lane, 2013).

**Essence of Purpose**

This study thus examines, three years after Martin’s death and the intense media coverage it inspired, the disparate shifts in political alienation among those three racial/ethnic groups. Political alienation is a social condition defined by an individual’s feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and despair within a political system (Nincic & Nincic, 2009; Reef & Knoke, 1999; Schwartz, 1973). Political alienation is normatively seen as unhelpful in a democratic system because it fosters distrust and separation from government (Nincic & Nincic, 2009; Shoho, 1996;
Weakliem & Borch, 2006). When people feel politically supported in a particular system, they accept and obey laws and they trust leaders to act boldly on their behalf to enact policies (Easton, 1975; Hetherington, 2005). Significantly for this study, political alienation can signal conflicts between groups or perceptions that one minority group is in greater favor with the ruling power structure (Domke, 2000; Oskarson, 2007; Schwartz, 197; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978).

Although political alienation is a concept studied extensively in sociology and political science, it is rarely applied to mass communication research. Similarly, mass communication research tends to focus on the coverage of an event and seldom examines the aftermath of an intensely covered, potentially transformative event, such as the Trayvon Martin case. Thus, this study offers the potential to expand academic knowledge of political alienation in a rarely examined situation: how the residents of a geographic community at ground zero of a national news event interact three years later.

**A Case for Critical Studies**

What is it about us that you don’t like? Maybe the answer to the question is simply you don’t think we deserve the things we have. You don’t think we’ve worked for them. You don’t think we’ve earned them... People used to think these things, you know, and they used to say them out loud. Now they don’t. They just think them. (King, 2003, p.147)

To understand theory, one may consider broadly that the concept of science as the empirical understanding of the world represents knowledge. And while scholars and philosophers may perceive, experience, and define *philosophy* and *science* differently, there is little debate over their quest to understand the world and to search for answers (Baran & Davis, 2011; Miller, 2005; Phillips, 1987). Obviously, social scientists study the social world and how humans interact in it (Shumaker, 2004). Though their philosophy might not be overtly detectable in their social science research, for centuries scholars have employed theory to make connections to observations and to guide their research (Baran & Davis, 2011; Chaffee & Berger, 1987).
Some scholars describe theory as concepts, and more abstract constructs, that relate to and describe a connection with specific phenomena. Others assert that theory has explanatory power and predictive tenets that can generalize phenomena and extend knowledge in the natural and social world (Chaffee & Berger, 1997; McQuail, 2011; Miller, 2005). Metatheoretical considerations include approaches to research that are inductive, which reasons that observations drive research and whatever theory emerges. Then there is deductive research, which reasons that theory is the driving force (Miller, 2005; Schumaker, 2004). As such, the current project employs critical race theory as a framework, which is considered to be a deconstructive, post-positivist, emancipatory perspective, rooted in critical theory and cultural studies (Baran & Davis, 2011; Delgado & Stefanie, 2000).

A critical theory concerns itself with issues of power and justice within a social system and the ways in which race, class, gender, sex, and other social institutions interrelate to construct such social systems (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). Baran and Davis (2012) propose “criticalists” who seek emancipation and social change within a dominant social hierarchy. Critical theory tends to support the marginalized over-privileged groups. And by reorganizing society, critical human values are prioritized addressing the “competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society—identifying who gains and who loses in a specific situation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 281). They critically study inequality and oppression via observation, description, and/or interpretation (Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). Metaphysics of this inquiry paradigm asserts that critical theory’s axiology is value-laden; critical theory’s epistemology argues knowledge is furthered when it releases people from power-laden influences; and critical theory’s ontology is shaped out of the social construction of
realism based on whether elites or free people retain social control (Baran & Davis, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

As such, the current project employs critical race theory as a framework, which is considered a deconstructive, post-positivist, post-structuralist, emancipatory perspective, rooted in critical theory and cultural studies (Baran & Davis, 2012; Delgado & Stefanić, 2000). West (2009) declares that present day matters of race cannot be addressed without understanding and acknowledging race matters of the past in the United States. Relatively recent critical research advanced neo-Marxist post colonialist studies on women and race, and argued that critical legal studies, replaced by critical race studies, did not further the case for government redress and legal/policy transformation to meet the needs of post-modern inequalities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004; West, 1991; West, 1997). With its roots deeply connected to critical theory and feminist theory, critical race presupposes that certain groups (e.g., Black people) in the United States do not have the same agency, voice, and opportunity as majority groups (e.g., White people) and that inequality and racism exist and affect all people. Furthermore, critical race takes a dialogic, dialectic approach to storytelling and human narratives to preserve the voice of the oppressed and to retell the story of the oppressed in a more accurate light (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011).

**Critical Race Theory**

The paradox of race is that the more marginalized and divided people are over trace phenotypical differences (e.g., skin and hair color), the more this country must address issues that stem from such theories as a whole (West, 2009). The theoretical framework for this study is critical race theory, which postulates that racial beliefs and attitudes are deeply embedded into societal structures and are not easily changed by individual events. As a critical theory, it takes a neo-Marxist and deconstructionist approach rooted in hermeneutics and seeks to foster understanding rather than taking a more neutral, post-positivist approach expressive of most
social science theories (Baran & Davis, 2011). Critical race theory suggests that racial and ethnic groups view themselves differently based on their majority or minority status in a society. Born in the civil rights era, critical race theory is often used to examine differences between majority White and minority Black communities and how they relate to each other. It is also used to include ethnic groups such as Hispanics and how they have been marginalized by people in power (Solorzano & Delgado, 2001; Velez, Perez, Benavides, de la Luz, & Solorzano, 2008).

Early critical race theorists realized that less overt, yet equally or even more damaging forms of racism were developing that warranted new theories and strategies to combat inequality and to amend how power, race, and racism connect in society (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Furthermore, critical race helps to link this study’s examination of the historical context of racial inequality and news events in the United States (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Domke, 2001). Critical race theory presupposes that most Whites do not see themselves as benefiting from White privilege and that, contrary to White presumptions of a color-blind, merit-based system, people of color are systematically denied access to equality and power.

Equally important is the theory’s postulations of race relations in terms of daily interactions connected to historic racial underpinnings. This includes American society’s neglect of the innate right to racial equality of all people from the founding of this country, which subjected minorities to demeaning stereotypes and racist patterns of oppression (Sloan et al., 1993). As such, critical race issues are rooted in civil rights discourses that emerged within a Black-White paradigm, but expanded to include immigrant groups, such as Hispanics, also marginalized by people of power and issues that intersect with class (Solorzano & Delgado, 2001; Velez, Perez, Benavides, de la Luz, & Solorzano, 2008). As mentioned previously, critical race postulates that Whites will deny that they have benefited from White privilege, and that
people of color, whether Black or Hispanic, have unequal access to privilege and power, such as differential access to safe housing, education, employment, and medical resources (Jones, 2002). Therefore, this theory helps inform the overall perspective taken in the current study and the attempt to view political alienation through the stories and expressions of the people involved.

Furthermore, philosophy attributed to Marx, Kant, Hegel, and ties emerged following World War I, all undergird tenets of critical race theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011). Since critical studies employ research as an active platform to enact change in society, critical race extends this to include academic work and activism (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). In the emancipatory tradition of Marxism, critical race research unveils disparate social classes and thus stresses that proletariats should recognize abuses of power structures and revolt against the elites (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011; Israel, 1971; Phillips, 1997). Similar to the theories of Marx, critical race asserts that when people realize they have no power over their work and no ownership in the product, they will feel no meaning in life and will therefore enact a revolution over controlling powers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011; Israel, 1971; Phillips, 1997). This is a common belief found in the work of critical race scholars and critical/feminist scholars alike (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011; Israel, 1971; Phillips, 1997). Therefore, common methodological approaches to critical race tend to employ storytelling and narratives by way of narrative inquiry, focus groups, legal analysis, and in-depth interviews employed in the current study (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Lastly, researchers in mass communication, sociology, psychology, education and anthropology approach critical race via qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

**Methods Used**

*The truth about stories is that that’s all we are (King, 2003, p.2).*

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Plato’s account of Socrates in the *Republic* tends to resonate with searchers and thinkers at varying periods of history. The image of wisdom manifested in Socrates the philosopher and Plato the searching student is a salient concept for many, where books are esteemed and people are free to read (Bloom, 1987). Indeed, the interpreted wisdom of Socrates by Plato asserts that the restless, discontented philosopher is more fulfilled than those non-philosophers who conformed, resigned to worldly assets (Bloom, 1987). It is, perhaps, in the wrestling of meaning and the constant, steadfast questioning that wisdom is born.

Socrates’ allegorical story of the *paradox of the cave* paints a mental portrait of the perceptions of the world (Bloom, 1987; Shumaker, 2004). Here, in this ancient depiction of prisoners in a cave, with their backs turned away from the fire, watching on the walls shadows of figures in the flames, is one isolated perspective of a lived experience. To the prisoners spending their days and nights watching the moving shadows on the walls, meaning and understanding of the world was limited and bound, even content. However, the prisoner who escaped and discovered that the shadows were more than just shadows, observing people coming and going past the flames. His fateful report to the others about this new experience and its meaning was not tolerated and he was consequently killed (Bloom, 1987; Shumaker, 2004). So too was Socrates in Plato’s account. After the teacher refused to refute some of his teachings on philosophy and was deemed a threat to society, he chose execution over renouncing his beliefs.

Beliefs and attitudes militate human behavior and the stories that propagate throughout human narratives are deeply anchored in the relentless questioning of life and wisdom (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Shumaker, 2004), and in what succeeding sections address, the search for knowledge or *scientia*. 

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Accordingly, in-depth interviews are an ideal tool for data collection, particularly when focus group interviews may be affected by the group dynamic and when issues of sensitivity (e.g., race) may incite anxiety (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Given that the study engaged with sensitive issues regarding race, politics, class, and history to some degree, scholars recommend employing in-depth interviews to fully understand the lived experiences and meanings associated with such complexities (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008). The employed theoretical framework views race, and issues affecting racial and class subordination, not as a fixed concept, but as one continuously shaped by political pressures and individual lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Thus, based upon this theory-driven project, its focus on each participant’s feelings about alienation and sensitive issues related to race and ethnicity, the researcher proposed the use of in-depth interviews. Additionally, each subject was offered the option of anonymity (Adams & Sasse, 2001).

Furthermore, the researcher conducted 30 face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, during fieldwork in the Sanford, Florida area (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). The sampling included local population groups of Blacks (cell one), Whites (cell two), and Hispanics (cell three) into three cells of 10 respondents each (McCracken, 1988). Within each of the three groups, two respondents were elite and eight others were rank-and-file members. Additionally, the researcher used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling of residents living in the Sanford, Florida area (part of Seminole County), to extract the data necessary to answer the study’s research questions and to gather the necessary information (Kvale, 2009). As such, Creswell (2013) describes a purposeful sampling when the “inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). Hence, the researcher first recruited
subjects via a purposeful sampling in the Sanford, Florida area with the help of an informant and then via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling can assist the researcher in gaining access in an unfamiliar location (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

The purpose of in-depth interviews was to probe and extract narratives from the participants’ stories, which the researcher used to examine and explore how the residents of this particular geographic community at ground zero of a national news event interacted three years later. In this study, the collected data during fieldwork are the narratives (the stories) that were constructed by the participants through language via a single statement or selection of statements, which may specify beliefs, a person’s explanation of some behavior or an action, a recollection, a viewpoint, or a thought (Yin, 2015). To construct an orderly database of the transcribed interviews, the researcher employed the Five-Phased Cycle: (1) Compiling data, (2) Disassembling data, (3) Reassembling (and Arraying) data, (4) Interpreting data, and (5) Concluding (Yin, 2012).

In the disassembling and reassembling of the data, theory-driven emerging and superordinate themes surfaced in the researcher’s iterative work. Along with the five-phased cycle, this study used thematic analysis for its qualitative data reduction, as outlined in Bauer and Gaskell (2000). In thematic analysis, interview narrative texts are reduced over two or three rounds. The first round of data reduction deals with selected passages from the interviews, which are summarized into sentences or stanzas, then further summarized into linked themes and superordinate themes. Next, the researcher recognizes emerging codes from the narrative texts, which are assigned to the related categories and research questions. The coded texts for themes are assigned for each new interview and through iterative work the categories are secured.
Additionally, the interpretation of the interview, fused with the “relevance” of the interview and researcher evaluation, compliments the explanatory power of this project.

Yin (2015) and Hahn (2008) suggest that the nature of the initial codes can be understood as “Level 1” codes or “open codes” and that they can vary. After the first round of assigned codes, the next codes can be understood as “Level 2” or “axial coding” that systematically develops subcategories and links them. Since this qualitative data serves to capture the narratives shared by various groups of participants (e.g., race/ethnicity and gender group) the coded narratives are organized into cells that relate to each posed research question. These cells, consisting of rows and columns, create a matrix of relevant narratives from participants’ original texts, which have been thematized in order to reduce data from the interviews. Finally, frequencies can be observed in thematic analysis by demonstrating how often a theme was present in the reduced narratives of emerging themes and their linkages to a particular research question’s super-ordinate theme (that supports the study’s theory).

**Significance of Study**

*Social science that doesn’t break your heart just isn’t worth doing (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.177).*

A primary contribution of this study lies in the fact that it moves beyond the usual question of how intensely-covered news affects consumers to try to understand if and how intense media coverage affects individual racial and ethnic members in a community where the coverage and crime originated. Much of the literature on crime news and consumers suggests a negative influence on racial and ethnic minorities, but no effects, including positive ones, on Whites. However, very little literature has examined how people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds perceive one another and how they perceive their own racial and ethnic groups years after coverage ends. Additionally, scant literature considers how intense media coverage in
a community may or may not shift the perceptions of political alienation. Also, no systematic study has examined the relationship among race, media, and alienation, especially one that enters into a community once saturated by news media for years, to understand in-depth an individual’s experience of political alienation.

Equally significant are the reflexive experiences documented by the researcher interviewing people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The researcher, described later in the methodology section, fully examined how her personal race and class wove into the biculue fabric of the current qualitative inquiry project during the in-depth interviews and data analysis. This allowed for further methodological techniques in mass communications (Ellis & Bochner, 2011). Critical theory calls for social science research to offer a more holistic perspective of the research process, and in the purest sense of employing critical race theory for the project, the researcher will recognize herself to be in a perceived power-laden, status-oriented position with the subject and in the proceeding analysis (Renzetti & Lee, 2009; Seidman, 2013). Some scholars suggest this type of analysis is crucial for researchers using qualitative inquiry to advance the knowledge of human experiences in a post-modern, post-qualitative era (Brannon, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). And other scholars advocate for a qualitative approach to sensitive issues, like race and violence, employing in-depth interviews to further data collection and analysis techniques when examining sensitive topics (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Renzetti & Lee, 2009; Seidman, 2013).

For five years the national news media has covered extremely controversial news events involving race. While the proposed project does not seek to generalize findings, it does hope to set a standard for similar future projects in areas like Baltimore, Maryland, where racial riots
broke out in the spring of 2015, and in Ferguson, Missouri, where violence continues after the death of Michael Brown, an 18-year-old black man who was shot by a white police officer.

Ultimately, scholarship contributing to understanding shifts in individual feelings of alienation following national news coverage is not prioritized. There is thus an overt gap in research analyzing the aforementioned specific topics. This leads to a disparate amount of research directly addressing shifts in a local community years after the intense media coverage of a racially charged news event involving the three main races and ethnicities. In fact, just recently George Zimmerman, who was acquitted by a jury of all charges in the Trayvon Martin shooting, reposted a photo of Martin on Twitter (Huffington Post, 2015). While Twitter reportedly took it down, “the photo, showing the 17-year-old Martin lying dead in the grass, was posted by Twitter user @SeriousSlav, who included the caption ‘Z-Man is a one-man army’ (Huffington Post, 2015).

Given the following study’s applied and theory-driven approach, the researcher focuses on the intersectionality of race, gender, class, rank, intense news coverage and the effects of such content on media consumers’ political behavior. Additionally, the study is significant because it focuses on social change by way of synthesizing historical experiences of varying groups in the U.S. by employing a critical race lens that moves research findings into community engagement concerning social issues. As a result, the research contributes to a broader understanding of how social and political forces shape our society, for better or for worse. In its methodology, honed journalism skills inform the researcher’s interviewing techniques to concentrate on qualitative skills and insight that are unique to racially ignited, and/or violent media coverage, that affects those traditionally perceived to be marginalized.
Of equal significance, this study’s focus on narratives through critical and communication scholarship represents a call for stories that can be used by researchers to examine how human beings understand their lived experiences. For example, how are stories shared and, once heard, give shape to our existence. Sculpting and layering rich systems of beliefs and attitudes about critical social issues, these narratives can explain how media coverage of our country’s racial violence and the silent disparate effects of socioeconomics and education are effective on political behavior. Probing under the surface of complex topics like race, class, and intense media coverage contributes to the explanatory power of people’s connections in a community where the media has covered a particular story for a long period.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Effects

We do not have a press that imagines a world where race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation intersect; where language and performance empower; or where human beings can become who they wish to be, free of prejudice, repression, and discrimination...What we do have, however, is a media that can instantly produce a sea of violent images, a media with a memory, but no critical history (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 126).

Over the past century, watchdog organizations and legislators have focused on mass media content, due to its perceived negative content related to violence, verbal and physical aggression, derogatory imagery of ethnicity, gender, and, above all, race (Chaffee, 1977; Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Lasswell, 1927; Lippman, 1922). Knowledge of social problems is often not the result of visible forces, but such social issues are likely understood over time by news consumers through the media’s construction of them (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Kensicki, 2004; Tuchman, Andsager, Antunovic, Bissell, Brown, Butler, & Vilela, 2013). Indeed, researchers now argue that “the media not only can be successful in telling us what to think about, they also can be successful in telling us how to think about it” (McCombs, 2005, p. 546). While this study does not employ agenda-setting, it is noteworthy that some issues focused on in news stories do play a key role in setting the public agenda by telling people how they should perceive and think about such attributes in news media content (McCombs, 2005; Shah, Domke & Wackman, 1996; Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004).

McCombs, Holbert, Kiousis, and Wanta (2011) assert that the news media influences an individual’s civic life and the way in which the democratic process enacts. Media also influences public policy by shaping content and by controlling the frequency of coverage of policy discussed via political elites (Domke, 2011; Domke, McCoy & Torres, 1999; McCombs et al., 2011). The rise in citizen journalism and in people’s access to digital platforms for information
consumption/dissemination has been considered influential more recently (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; McCombs et al., 2011). Also, “media content has been found to influence citizens' evaluations of government, feelings of self-efficacy, and levels of participation in the political system” (Kensicki, 2004, p. 65). Additionally, political scientists agree that the media influences what issues are most salient for individuals and shapes those issues into approaches individuals may use to set criteria for political judgments (Druckman, 2004; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar & Kinder, 1989; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). While the debate about polarization shifts in the American electorate is ongoing, news media may in fact play a role in perceptions of polarization. Some scholars posit that the media contribute to Americans feeling more polarized today than ever (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2014).

Furthermore, news content about violence that imparts at least a trace of exaggerated or misleading context related to racial and ethnic minority groups affects people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, but does so differently (Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 1999). Violence is defined by concepts referencing aggression, crime, conflict, and antisocial behavior that inflict either physical or psychological harm (Downing & Husband, 2005; Potter, 2009). Extant research suggests that attitudes and public opinion on social and public policy issues are shaped by concerns related to race and ethnicity, so much so that even “race neutral” issues such as welfare are influenced by race (Coleman, 2003; Martinez & Craig, 2008). Because race is a highly salient social category, when people of racial and ethnic minority groups are overrepresented as perpetrators in news content related to violence, research suggests that exaggerated perceptions of differences and biases are induced. Such content has causal links to consumers, favoring one’s own racial and ethnic group (Meyers, 2004; Richardson, 2005). Over time, exposure to this type of news content about race and violence may lead to harmful effects.
on an individual’s perceptions of social and public policy issues, or affect political external efficacy and issues related to race relations (Craig & Hill, 2011).

**News Media and Race**

Examining the effects spawned from news media, research demonstrates that some news stories reinforce pre-existing stereotypes of minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Domke, 2001; Entman, 1992; Ramasubramanian, 2007). Such research illustrates that “media content mentioning or even hinting at race or ethnicity will induce audience members to respond in a prejudicial manner” (Richardson, 2005, p. 523). Because race and ethnicity are highly salient concepts in media content, over time they affect news consumers (Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). However, Richardson (2005) suggested that for some news coverage, media abstain from referencing race or ethnicity. In contrast, Coleman (2003) argued that scholars believe media producers unintentionally communicate via some level of stereotyping when covering minorities. Agenda-setting research in mass communication demonstrates that race as a variable may play a limited role in the agenda-setting process. However, researchers did find differences between minorities and whites on some salience of issues, suggesting that interpersonal communications between members of racial and ethnic groups may reinforce the agenda-setting influence alongside exposure to coverage from minority media outlets for minorities (Miller & Wanta, 1997). News media, as addressed earlier, have been found to exert powerful influences on public perceptions of issues linked to race in news, such as issues of poverty and welfare (Gainous, Craig, & Martinez, 2008). Such influences are found in regions across the country irrespective of areas inhabited by racial and ethnic populations (Domke, McCoy & Torres, 1999; Gilens, 1996). Perceptions on race influence policy decisions and public opinion that shape a social reality often affecting issues of minorities (Craig & Niemi, 1990; Domke, 2000; Gilens, 1996).
Likewise, prolonged exposure to media stereotypes of race and ethnicity become common knowledge and form cognitive shortcuts to activate negative stereotypes associated with minority groups faster than information unrelated to negative stereotypes (Coleman, 2003; Leets, 2001; Meyers, 2004; Ramasubramanian, 2007). Results based on a content analysis study found “journalists producing this content must be practicing some type of racial automaticity in their decision-making to lead to this type of content” (Coleman, 2003, p. 297). And Ramasubramanian (2007) posited that a substantial number of long-standing stereotypes of racial and ethnic minorities in the media, and “research of depictions of African Americans in the media reveals that portrayals of this group as criminal, aggressive, and unintelligent help reinforce and maintain hostile anti-black prejudice” (p. 249). Linking news consumers to citizens involved in a public society, Coleman’s (2003) research described active news seekers as active citizens engaged in social issues. Conversely, the research that Pinkleton et al. (2012) conducted on news perceptions and self-efficacy indicated that civic involvement is declining. However, activated stereotypes remain influential (Entman, 2007; Entman & Rojecki, 2006). While this project does not specifically focus on stereotypes, given its proposed employment of critical race factors, derogatory stereotypes are a factor in people’s feelings of alienation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gilens, 1996).

First, mass communication scholars recognize journalism’s reputation for being preoccupied with conflict more than resolution (Lloyd & Seaton, 2006; Seaton, 2005). Pauly addresses this in his (2009) study, as he describes “the profession’s habit of framing issues between opposing views, portraying elections as horse races, attending more closely to strong, extreme minority opinions than to the moderate majority, and returning again and again to familiar stories of violence and human depravity” (p. 7). He asserts that journalists are like
storytellers – exploitive storytellers, if you will – exploiting narrative tensions and rendering social order (Pauly, 2004; Pauly, 2009). And they have adapted their newsgathering to tight time constraints where quick access to opposing sources on a topic is critical to disseminate information and to mainly propagate issues of conflict related to war, disease, politics, society, and law (Fahmy, Wanta, Johnson, & Zhang, 2011; Pauly, 2004; Pauly, 2009).

Before addressing intense media coverage, this study finds media and journalism to be synchronous in that it is a profession that provides information to people about their socially constructed world or their democracy, when in the United States. Pauly (2009) describes it “as a watchdog against government corruption,” which “offers impartial, factual, and objective information uncolored by propaganda or publicity,” and “alerts citizens to the existence of controversy and conflict, but never enters such controversies itself, always offering citizens enough information to allow them to make up their own minds” (p. 13). What it does not do is encourage dialogical practices, especially during intensely covered news events, when varying groups of people are covered and/or affected (Pauly, 2004). Much research on intensely covered news events has focused on crime news and consequential media effects on community residents and on audiences across the country (Armstrong, 2013; Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 1999; Entman & Rojecki, 2001).

Armstrong (2013) and Liebler (2010) describe the news media’s intensified national reporting during a violent crime case as intense media coverage. Additionally, academic research suggests that extensive media coverage impacts a community both in the immediate aftermath of the news event and years later (Kay, Reilly, Connolly, & Cohen, 2010; Walsh-Childers, Lewis, & Neely, 2011). Intense media coverage creates an unsettling atmosphere for residents of the local community (Kay, Reilly, Connolly, & Cohen, 2010). The impact of news coverage on
residents has been found to be not just isolated to the news event and its aftermath, but to residents of a community who experience alienation from the community, anger, and renewed feelings of loss/grief years later (Hight & Smyth, 2003; Kay et al., 2010). In fact, in one research study, more than two years later when the intense media coverage had dissolved, residents expressed feelings of alienation from their community, from their family, friends, and neighbors, and this caused a perceived division in their community (Kay, Reilly, Connolly, & Cohen, 2010). As such, the following definition for intense media coverage of a news event will be employed in this study: Intense media coverage is the uninterrupted presence of local, regional, and national news media covering a news event in the community where it took place (Kay, Reilly, Connolly, & Cohen, 2010).

**Race and Ethnicity**

*Without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be ‘white’ – they would be Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and others engaged in class, ethnic, and gender struggles over resources and identity (West, 2007, pp. 107-108).*

To understand contemporary race matters in America, race matters of the past cannot be overlooked (West, 1997). While research demonstrates that the concept of race is socially constructed based on a group’s phenotypical differences (e.g., skin color), the concept of ethnicity is related to a group’s culture, beliefs and values, and has some connection to varying global regions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Deggans, 20121; Entman & Rojecki, 1997). And irrespective of one’s racial or ethnic background, all human beings are one, but these very concepts (race and ethnicity) are heavily entrenched in the historic underpinnings of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Entman & Rojecki, 1997). When news media coverage erupts locally and nationally, race is a salient attribute, which affects racial and ethnic groups of people differently (Miller & Wanta, 1996). This study’s notable critical race theorists, such as
Derek Bell and earlier civil rights movement leaders including Martin Luther King Jr., W.E.B DuBois, and Rosa Parks, asserted that not only should racism and systemic power structures that deny equality and access to opportunity be studied, they should be challenged, and dissolved (Baran & Davis, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Thus, in February of 2012, when the Trayvon Martin shooting news event went viral across all news media platforms, within 10 days race, ethnicity, and links to crime and criminality were at the forefront for American audiences (Prieto, 2012; Pew Research, 2012).

Social constructionists assert the objective concept of race as a product of social thought, scarcely related to biology or genetics (Austin, 2010; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). As far back as the 1930s, studies demonstrated that there was no homogeneity within one race and that the human race is, indeed, one biological race (Klineberg, 1935). More recently, social scientists have grappled with whether race and ethnicity really exist. In fact, some scholars have gone so far to connect race to science when “systemic racism becomes embodied in the biology of racialized groups and individuals, and embodied inequalities reinforce a racialized understanding of human biology” (Gravlees, 2009, p. 54). Debate among scholars addressing race and ethnicity as a social construction was popularized following the Civil Rights Movement. Traditional measurements of intelligence testing were challenged in the United States, and news media were blamed for dismissing the genetic component (e.g., racial factors) involved in an individual’s intelligence and aptitude for performance. For example, it became unpopular in the 1970s to report findings that supported the heritability of intelligence, which purports a racial component to disparate intelligence between Blacks and Whites. Studies had demonstrated such results and the news media had misrepresented the research (Snyderman & Rothman, 1990). Regardless of racial or ethnic background, human beings are defined as one species; however,
these very concepts of race and ethnicity are entrenched in the historic underpinnings of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Entman & Rojecki, 1997).

Definitions employed for race and ethnicity refers to race as the phenotypical differences, or physical characteristics, between groups of people (e.g., black or white skin color, or hair and eye color), and ethnicity, refers to cultural intergroup differences and factors in attitudes, beliefs, and norms (Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996). Mass communication scholars argue that there are important racial and ethnic differences to consider, which influence interpersonal communication, media consumption, and intergroup beliefs, attitudes, and participation (Appiah, 2001, 2004; Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Hence the current project’s critical race framework informs the study’s focus on race and tenets of racism, historically rooted and still affecting this country’s social and political fabric today. Undeniably, Blacks have endured deliberate acts of discrimination throughout the history of the United States, while Whites have benefited from systematic racial segregation (Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Mills, 1997).

Furthermore, critical theory scholars in this country aver that there is a black-white paradigm that considers all people to be in one of two groups: black or white (Entman, 2004; Deggans, 2012). Critical race and critical studies scholars suggest that this concept of grouping people is historic and triggers an implicit power structure of a dominant race, (e.g., White), and a subordinate race, (e.g., Black) and other minorities, (e.g., Asians, Latinos, Afro-Caribbean) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Later in this chapter, the researcher addresses this binary paradigm, with regard to the community of Sanford, Florida, where perceptions of race and the black-white binary system are key factors in determining shifts in political alienation among in-group and out-group members (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Domke, 2001, 2000). The three
groups interviewed for this research project were Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics/Latinos. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) propose that the “framework” used to understand and evaluate/process race in the United States employs an invisible binary system, which positions all minorities and their historic experiences and grievances to those of African Americans. As such, whites interviewed for the study were considered the dominant race in Sanford in the black-white paradigm (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Fish (2013) writes that the concept of race is confusing and a blend of two very different concepts – biological race (inexistent in human species) and social race (related to culture and ancestry). George Zimmerman was labeled in the news coverage as Hispanic and White Hispanic, mixed race, even White, but never Hispanic White, or closer in nature to his ethnic identity, Hispanic Black (Deggans, 2012; Fish, 2012). Zimmerman’s mother’s side of the family has African ancestry, which could qualify him as black in the state of Louisiana (Fish, 2012). Thus, race and ethnicity in this country can be complicated and confusing, and America’s black-white binary system of race is affective and influential in the proposed dissertation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

**Race, Ethnicity, and Class**

Social and political issues are frequently constructed in a way that groups and individuals, including institutions, mêlée to shape social reality and to position themselves as a dominant voice for political elites and rank-and-file (Domke, 2000). This study recognizes cleavages found within racial and ethnic groups in the United States, due in part to distinct differences in social class between political elites and rank-and-file members of society. Additionally, scholars mostly agree that an individual’s race, when socio-economic status, education level, and political knowledge are considered, may affect levels of participation, and enact race and/or class cognitions (Verba, Sidney, & Nie, 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980).
For example, research demonstrates that political elites are perceived by other elites and by rank-and-file members of society as superior members in the community (Schubert, Dye, & Zeigler, 2015). Due to their influence over ideas, attitudes, and opinions, based on occupational prominence, advanced education level, wealth, and leadership in organizations/institutions, they control local economies and political power (Dahl, 1958; Mills, 1956). Rank-and-file members are perceived by political elites and by rank-and-file people as inferior people in the community (Schubert, Dye, & Zeigler, 2015). They hold little to no power in politics and the economy, due to their lack of education, income, and involvement with and leadership in organizations and institutions (Michels, 2011; Hughes, Sharrock, & Martin, 2003).

Ironically, some scholars contend that in order for a democracy to function, only a small group of elites can be involved in its governance (Dye & Ziegler, 1997). Political elite members in society, irrespective of race and ethnicity, find it mutually beneficial to work together, accept one another, and share connections to power in the community (Mills, 1957). For the purpose of this study, definitions of political elite and rank-and-file individuals address the political context of community members of Sanford, Florida, shaping policy and civic culture before and after Trayvon Martin’s shooting. Fiorina (2013), in his argument that Americans are not more polarized than 30 to 40 years ago, suggests that political elites and activists are better sorted, a concept discussed in the next section. Since a concept reviewed in this study is political alienation, which relates to an individual’s sense of powerlessness to affect government, activists and political elites are considered elite (Nincic & Nincic, 2002).

Domke et al. (1999) demonstrated that people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are influenced by media coverage of political issues by way of perceptions of racial/ethnic stereotypes and issue formation and positions related to economic, political, and
legal issues. News coverage focused on racial and ethnic stereotypes about social and political issues is more influential when political elites are a part of the discourse (Domke et al., 1999). Such influences affect race relations and political cognitions and judgments (Domke et al., 1999). The aforementioned section discussed America’s black-white paradigm (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Additionally, under this assumption of power to the majority rule system, Whites may not be aware of the disparate class issues of oppression and inequality involved with Black and Hispanic/Latino experience (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Also, race and class were salient concepts reviewed in the Stand Your Ground (SYG) law and self-defense coverage during George Zimmerman’s trial; feeling a sense of threat and enacting authority also affects issues of race and class (Deggans, 2012; Ramanbramansian, 2012; Turk, 1969). Deference and power are usually reserved for individuals in authority and for a racial majority (Craig, 1993; Turk, 1969). Recently, Pew Research (2014) showed that Hispanics and Latinos have shifting perceptions of identity and agency, at times identifying as White. Zimmerman was, in recall, acquitted on all charges related to the shooting of Trayvon Martin (Pew, 2012). Thus, considerations for the current study note that news coverage of race, ethnicity, and class intersect and influence people differently (Domke, 1999; Pember & Calvert, 2011). Lastly, Delgado (2000) and West (1997) assert that minorities should create alliances, or form connections between groups that benefit one another in varying ways, to empower individuals, and to dissolve harmful prejudices against racial and ethnic groups.

**Modern Racism**

Critical race theorists present a modern way of understanding race in the United States via a steadfast commitment to promote racial equality through action and through the restoration of historic wrongs done to minority groups (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Modern racism emerges in mass communication research.
(Armstrong, 2012; Entman, 2012). When examining racialized news coverage of violence, Ramasubramanian (2007) affirms that media stereotypes of race and ethnicity become common knowledge and form cognitive shortcuts to activate negative stereotypes associated with minority groups faster than that of information unrelated to such stereotypes. Moreover, understanding derogatory stereotypes as a symptom of racism, including modern racism, critical race theorists acknowledge that racism is challenging to cure. They posit that in the United States, regardless of era, there remains a glass ceiling effect on racial equality in policy (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefanic, 2000). It is not a direct focus in this critical race study, but modern racism should be addressed and made transparent when examining political alienation. Historically, traditional racism prompted the social and civil movements in the early 1900s that acted as catalysts for Blacks to demand and pursue equal rights and opportunities even amid the Great Depression, World War I, and World War II.

Hence, because of the experiences of Black Americans with or knowledge of historic and modern racism, one’s race can be critical to survival (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Domke, 2001; West, 1997). It can also remind a person that the perception of his/her minority position in society represents a problem; for years, being black often meant being asked by insidious whites how it felt to be black in America pre-civil rights movement (West, 1997). Additionally, Loury (2005) defined racial inequality by positing that “racial equality requires that, irrespective of their racial origins, all human beings should be treated equally, should enjoy equal access to the conditions and the capacities required to lead the good life, and that when relevant their legitimate ethnocultural differences should be taken into account in our treatment of them” (p. 610).
Entman and Rojecki (2006) found data that supported their hypothesis that local news contributes to “modern racism,” as a compound of hostility and rejection by Whites toward Blacks’ aspirations. Dixon (2008) posited that modern racism consists of three attitudes: 1) There remains an anti-African American affect and hostility towards Blacks; 2) there remains a political resistance to the political demands of Blacks; and 3) there has been a dissolve of historic racism and racial discrimination, which does not prevent Blacks from attaining success.

**Black Power and Black Lives Matter**

In the Sanford community, the tragic death of Martin ignited news media, as some coverage focused on the victimization of a teenager, age 17, Black, male, and unarmed. The media also reported Martin’s involvement in an altercation with a non-White male that escalated to a fatal shooting. The consequential legal proceedings attracted national attention over racial disparities and tenets of modern racism. People across the nation feared a violent uprising from Blacks, while Blacks sought to gain agency to protect their rights as United States citizens against those who enacted violence on them, due to their status in society (Cho, 2012). The Black Lives Matter social movement that followed Martin’s death was seen by some as the re-emergence of the Black Power movement of the 60s and 70s, which grew out of the Civil Rights Movement.

This study recognizes that Black Lives Matter was a way to mobilize Black families around the media frenzy of news stories about race and violence, which began with Martin and was active in subsequent coverage throughout the U.S. It also demonstrates that participants might link Black Lives Matter to Black Power, in their narratives about alliances and community mobilization, including news media content about Trayvon Martin. As an ideology and practice, Black Power stemmed from the social and political issues in the 1960s. Specifically, the term "Black Power" was first used socially and politically by Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks,
organizers and spokespersons for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, on June 16, 1966. That day, in Greenwood, Mississippi, after the shooting of James Meredith during the March Against Fear, “Stokely Carmichael said, ‘This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested and I ain't going to jail no more! The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. What we gonna start sayin' now is Black Power’” (Van Deburg, 1992, p. 32). After his speech, crowds who had gathered around the event, including journalists who were rather skeptical about the movement, began chanting “Black Power” in unison (Van Deburg, 1992).

Thus, some Blacks adopted the term and employed it to express a radical movement for equality and human rights. In stark contrast, some Whites linked the term to violence and threats. However, the majority of Americans were simply confused over the concept of Black Power, and the media often and intentionally contributed to the muddle. For a decade, Black Power evolved into a social movement with emphasis on influence, respect, and power. If there was a question about whether or not the movement’s design was to incite civil unrest, Whites had already done so through cruel and violent treatment of African Americans for centuries. Instead, Black Power was a replacement for the "Freedom Now!" slogan of the non-violent leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. Whether it be in the 1960s or in modern times, Black Power is a social movement designed to empower people to combat America's crippling racism and oppressive institutions of inequality (Van Deburg, 1992).

Accordingly, this research study’s critical race lens examines how the participants’ narratives mediate their stories of Trayvon Martin and media content about the Black Lives Matter movement. Some posit that the resurgence of a social movement by Blacks following racialized news coverage of Trayvon Martin can be linked to President Barack Obama,
America’s first Black president. The president was active in media after Martin’s death and throughout the trial, addressing the current climate of race relations in America, safety of Black males, especially younger ones, and the Stand Your Ground law linked to Zimmerman’s actions. Research suggests that when it comes to policy enactment, a president’s decision to go public in order to mobilize people around a particular policy preference does work, short-term or temporarily (Cavari, 2013). Recent scholarship demonstrates constraints of policy alternatives and the presidency’s institutional power to affect policy enactment and the public are inevitably prevailing (Cavari, 2013; Nelson, 2013). This is true because “Presidents can influence the public agenda, they can present a clear policy preference, but they, thankfully, cannot command the political debate” (Cavari, 2013, p. 247). Policy preferences are strongest in the direction of the president, just after a president goes public, among those who watch their speech. Such citizens have increased political participation, and they are effective in terms of affecting public opinion (Baum & Kernell, 1999; Cavari, 2013). However, the constraints influenced by news media and political challengers are squelched by short-lived presidential successes influenced by the media and political accomplices.

Despite data that demonstrates white supremacy and its subordination of people of color continues to prevail in American institutions (Entman, 2006; Dixon, 2008), there is a perception among majority population groups that racism and discrimination is decreasing. As such, through a critical race lens, the re-emergence of a Black power movement, like Black Lives Matter, is equally attributable to the waxing and waning over the years of a perceived notion of reduced discrimination.

**Binary Paradigm**

Again, while Zimmerman did not assert Florida’s first-in-the-nation “Stand Your Ground” (“SYG”) law, which had replaced the common law retreat rule, he declared self-defense
as the center of the case’s debate for over 19 months (Prieto, 2012; Kaduce & Davis, 2012). Zimmerman was acquitted on all charges related to the shooting of Trayvon Martin (Pew, 2012). Recall that George Zimmerman was labeled in the media as Hispanic and White Hispanic, mixed race, even white, but never Hispanic White, or closer in nature to his ethnic identity, Hispanic Black (Deggans, 2012; Fish, 2012). America’s Black-White binary system – reaffirming this country’s confusions over race and ethnicity – is affective and influential in the proposed dissertation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Critical race and critical studies scholars affirm that this concept of grouping people is historic and enacts an implicit power structure of a dominant race, White, as a position of power, and Black, including other minorities (e.g., Asians, Latinos, Afro-Caribbeans), as a position of less power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The Black-White paradigm considers that all people in this country are lumped into two groups: Black or White. In the community of Sanford, the researcher recognized that during in-depth interviews of its residents, perceptions of race and feelings linked to political alienation had to be accounted for in the research planning, data collection, and analysis (Domke, 2001, 2000). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) propose that the “framework” used to understand and examine race in the United States employs an invisible binary system, which positions all minorities to the historic experiences and grievances of those who are African American.

Therefore, White participants would be considered residents who have been historically in power and empowered in the Sanford area and in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Via a Black-White binary lens, the researcher understands that White participants may not be aware of the oppression and inequality experienced by Blacks and Hispanic/Latinos (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As such, White participants might express feelings of being detached from
Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos in the area, and they could express feeling more empowered around issues of government and politics, due to the very nature of “SYG” coverage and the trial results. Additionally, within this paradigm, Whites might not recognize the suffering and the perceived glass ceiling of racial and ethnic groups’ experiences in Sanford and could express beliefs that relate to tenets of modern racism. These might include believing racism is no longer a problem in the United States and minorities are afforded the same opportunities as Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Conversely, in America’s binary paradigm, Black participants might express feeling more politically alienated from government and out-group members (Kaduce & Davis, 2013; Nincic & Nincic, 2002). Also, Blacks would experience the world through an oppressed lens of power and voice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This was particularly true when considering the community’s intense news event, covered as the violent death of a male Black teenager by an attacker labeled at times as a White Hispanic and not charged with the crime. Furthermore, Hispanics and Latinos, though not typically grouped in a majority group, might express feeling influenced by their recent gains in social status and agency in the United States (Martinez, 2000). In fact, a recent U.S. Census (2012) stated that a portion of this group self-identify themselves as White in some cases. Due in part to this option, that Hispanics can be of any race in a Black-White binary system, some Hispanics may feel disconnected to racially discriminating experiences, such as those of native-born Blacks, given their more recent immigration into the U.S. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

As such, the researcher recognized that Hispanics and Latinos might express feeling increasingly dominant and efficacious in government, shifting their racial identity to share the experiences of the White majority members in positions of power and agency. Also, due to the
pervasive media coverage for nearly two years, the researcher understood that this group could identify with Whites’ descriptions of threat and authority (Ramanbramansian, 2012, Turk, 1969). Research demonstrates that deference and power are usually reserved for those in authority and grouped in majority (Turk, 1969). In the ever-changing demographics in America and their assimilation into a White structure of power in political systems, this study does not suppose all Hispanics/Latinos express feeling isolated, despair, and powerless politically. In fact, some may not express feelings linked to political alienation, after the news coverage or in terms of historic narratives about oppression (Armstrong, 2012).

**Intersectionality and Identity**

Researchers assert that a person has many identities they may relate to, at differing times, and for varying purposes. As such, no one person has one identity, a critical component to consider when developing questions that address racial and ethnic identity and/or geographic identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) assert that, in the context of intersectionality and social identity, “no person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity. A white feminist may also be Jewish or working class or a single mother. An African American activist may be a male or female, gay or straight. A Latino may be a Democrat, a Republican or even a black – perhaps because that person’s family hails from the Caribbean” (p. 10). This study sought to ascertain how participants identified themselves within the context of the project, its geographic location in the Sanford, Florida area, and the nature of race and ethnicity the project focuses on, to fully examine how groups of people relate after an intensely covered news event. Rouse and Foucault, among other scholars, addressed geography, physical space, and environment as non-negotiable in one’s arrival to one’s identity. In fact, some scholars posit that geographic identity is among many identities a person relates to throughout their lifetime. In a
similar manner, this study examines narratives undergirding one socially identifying as a Black male, or a White female Floridian, or as an Pan-American male in the Sanford area.

Because race and ethnicity are salient to one’s identity and in media messages, they are understood in this study to be a dominant identifier in the identified sampling (Domke, 2001; Miller & Wanta, 1996). However, class is also salient for some minority members over race. When a person’s socioeconomics, education, and occupation are considered elite (Bobo & Gilliam), this was also considered in the study. Deaux (2003) and Tajfel (1979) demonstrated that social identity is a human experience, which might include geography, class, race, occupation, gender, etc., and/or any number of identities. Since a person’s social identity is how one groups him or herself through a set of characteristics that are meaningful and significant to that person, geography can be a component in social identity for some people, especially for foreign-born minorities in the United States (Deaux, 2003). In fact, some minorities socially identify with their environments over race, especially if he or she is from a homogenous region where race is not a salient component (Rogers, 2006). In the United States, for native born Blacks, race is a dominant identity, which can be connected to geography (Deaux, 2003; Gilens, 1996). This, in part, relates to the Black American’s experiences with or knowledge of historic and modern racism; one’s race can be critical to survival (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Domke, 2001; West, 1997).

Also, racial identity is described as how a person connects their membership to a particular racial or ethnic group. Furthermore, a researcher may use qualitative techniques to understand the depth of one’s connection to that racial or ethnic group (Rogers, 2006; Yin, 2015). Rogers (2006) suggests that to understand through in-depth interviews a person’s racial identity and group consciousness, the researcher must formulate questions that probe in-group
and out-group experiences or examine group consciousness. Oftentimes, political scientists conducting in-depth interviews with foreign-born natives try to tap into whether such interviewees identify within a racial or ethnic context or a geographic one (Craig & Hill, 2011; Rogers, 2006; Creswell; Demzin & Lincoln, 2004). And while there is a bevy of research on the matter of identity – social, geographic, racial – qualitative researchers in the critical studies tradition often describe voice to be synonymous and interconnected between the researcher and the subject, when the researcher and interviewee converse during in-depth interviewing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012; Seinberg, 2012; Yin, 2015). Additionally, significant to this study was how the coverage of George Zimmerman described his racial and geographic identity as a local majority group member, in varying ways, one with influence and power, which emerged in the narratives of participants about powerlessness and despair.

**A Critical Race Approach to Alienation and Power**

...it is in the common experience of alienation, of exploitation, of exclusion itself. It may have many manifestations, and may be exacerbated by other marginalities. (Gonzalez & Treece, 1992)

Earlier, this study communicated how critical race issues were popularized in the 1970s. Such issues gave rise to critical race theory and stemmed from the works of Derrick Bell, a Black man, and Ellen Freeman, a White woman, who were both “distressed” over alienating racial tensions and the slow pace of racial reform (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Social change advocates like W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks led the racial movement in the United States in an effort to confront the historically perceived marginalized daily experiences of alienation and despair experienced by minorities. However, in the wake of what seems to be a string of intense media coverage involving race and violence (e.g., Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Marissa Alexander, and Michael Brown), the reduction in political participation of people whose voices and views are politically alienated seemed to occur.
Thus, when there is unequal division in groups of people feeling a weakened sense of attachment to political institutions, such as attachment to elected officials and voting, some voices will be alienated and their needs will not be addressed (Oskarson, 2007; Weakliem & Borch, 2006). In addition, groups politically alienated are not engaged to be heard, while others are advantaged as a result of being engaged and participatory. Also, despite increasing debates over Americans’ lack of political participation compared to other democratic industrial nations, political scientists have not concentrated on the role of political alienation to any extent for the past 20 years (Hetherington, 2005). While the concept of “alienation” is found in decades of sociological studies, political scientists examine polarization, trust, discontent, and efficacy, especially in survey studies. However, societal conditions linked to disparate racial and ethnic communities are in constant flux (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978). And for a nuanced understanding of the causes influencing political alienation on an individual level, investigating responses to citizens’ feelings of distance from their government on a community level is warranted.

**Alienation and Political Alienation**

Today, some scholars argue that Americans’ voices are not elevated and heard equally (Jacobs et al., 2004). A focal concept to this study is political alienation. An important question scholars’ wrestle with is why Americans feel distant from their government, and why there is a widening gap between Americans and their government since the 1960’s (Lipset & Schneider, 1983). Feelings of political alienation have been connected to rioting, protest voting, political violence against ruling regimes, explicit use of mass media, non-voting behavior, and renunciation of American citizenship (Almond & Verba, 1989; Finifter, 1970; Herring, 1989; Schwartz, 1973; Thompson & Horton, 1960). Definitions of political alienation vary from an “enduring sense of estrangement from political institutions” (Citlin et al., 1975, p. 3) to “a social condition in which citizens have or feel a minimal connection with the exercise of power” (Reef
& Knoke, 1999, p. 414). More recent definitions describe political alienation as feeling a weakened attachment to societal institutions (Weakliem & Borch, 2006). Other scholars define political alienation as a disinterest in political affairs and a lack of trust in public officials (Oskarson, 2007).

This study’s philosophical and methodological approach addresses shifts in an individual’s feelings of alienation, due to the researcher’s focus on race and ethnicity. As such, the following definition for political alienation is employed in this study: An individual’s feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and despair between oneself and the political system of a society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Finifer, 1970; Nincic & Nincic, 2009). Powerlessness references feeling an inability to influence one’s polity; isolation refers to lonely feelings; despair references feelings of hopelessness (Shoho, 1996). Alienation is a concept defined by a myriad of subjects. However, the belief of estrangement is found across most disciplines examining alienation (Nincic & Nincic, 2002). Most notably, Rousseau’s (1775) and Israel’s (1971) account of Marx’s philosophical meaning of alienation described an individual’s separation from one’s relation to self and to society, culture, or political systems. The concept has also been defined via multiple components, meaning powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, self-estrangement, and cultural estrangement (Seeman, 1975, 1983). One scholar further shaped the definition to describe political alienation as “the estrangement or separation of an individual from particular political institutions, values, structures, or regimes to which he belongs or is related” (Chen, 1992, p. 42). But over the years, scholars examining alienation and its relationship to politics and government began focusing on concepts in social research that seemed to unravel the overuse and confusion of the term (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei; 1991).
Polarization

While not the same as political alienation, this study considers factors in political polarization in the American electorate. Polarization references divergence of one’s political beliefs, attitudes, and opinions and it is one important concept in American politics (Converse, 1964; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Niemi et al., 2011). However, scholars don’t necessarily agree on what polarization is and its consequences in the United States (Ura & Ellis, 2012). Some political scientists studying polarization allege we are more polarized today than we’ve ever been, while other scholars counter by suggesting we are not more polarized than before (Abramowitz, 2006; 2013; Fiorina, 2008, 2013; Niemi et al., 2011, Ura & Ellis, 2012).

Pew Research Center (2014) addressed political polarization in America and proposed that divisions are greater for politically active, engaged individuals, and that “Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades. These trends manifest themselves in myriad ways, both in politics and in everyday life.” Although Abramowitz (2013) argues that the American electorate has become much more polarized ideologically over the past two decades, Fiorina (2013) suggests that the American electorate as a whole is not substantially more polarized than before, but “partisan” polarization results from a process called sorting. Sorting is a process whereby people who identify with a party today will likely identify with the ideologically “correct” party, more than they would have in the past (Ellis, 2012).

The concept of polarization in the United States is, indeed, used widely by media and consumers alike, but scholars continue to debate exactly what this means (Abramowitz et al., 2003; Abramowitz, 2010; Hetherington, 2015; Levendusky & Malhortra, 2014). Despite the intent focus of political scientists on the concept of polarization for decades (Abramowitz, 2013;
Converse, 1964; Fiorina, 2013; Niemi et al., 2011), the question under examination isn’t are we Americans polarized, but how polarized are we Americans and when?

To address such issues, Fiorina (2013) asserts that partisan polarization has increased partly, not entirely, because of sorting. Fiorina (2006) defined polarization as partisan sorting, which occurs when the public shifts opposing ideological camps corresponding with their party. Sorting is different from ideological polarization in America. Instead, it is a process whereby people who identify with a party today will likely identify with the ideologically “correct” party more than they would have in the past (Ellis, 2012). Thus people with conservative views (or ideological identifications) are less likely to be Democrats, and those with liberal views (or ideological identifications) are less likely to be Republicans (Fiorina, 2009). Also, some divide is evident in American culture, but not extensively (Fiorina, 2005). Instead polarization is linked to political class. For example, it is linked to people who are elected officials, elites, and activists (Fiorina, 2013). And it is this sorting that creates a gridlock in Washington, D.C., which leads to economic problems and awareness of an increase in the country’s economic debt.

In “America’s Missing Moderates,” Fiorina suggests that the U.S. is not more polarized than it was 30 to 40 years ago, but it is better sorted with regard to policy affiliation and ideology. How the public thinks about issues is concurrently the same as in 1987, and people tend to self-identify mostly as moderate, then conservative, and then as liberal, despite electoral instability for four cycles. In contrast, Abramowitz (2013) asserts that the ideological polarization movement away from the center is due to ideological extremes. While policy positions and party IDs have increased, so has self-identifying ideologically (Abramowitz & Sanders, 2003).
Regardless, partisan polarization has existed for a while – people and congressional politics have divided themselves for many years (Niemi et al., 1984). Scholars assert, additionally, that it exists when people take opposing positions on issues, e.g., abortion and same sex marriage, which the mass public has been increasingly polarized more recently (Abramowitz & Sanders, 2009; Ellis, 2012; Niemi et al., 2011). While some scholars define polarization to be when people take extreme opinions on issues, other scholars define it as a shift in ideological extremes, e.g., radicalized opinion and attitudinal polarization (Abramowitz & Sanders, 2009; Carsey et al., 2009; Ellis, 2012; Niemi et al., 2011). Polarization also occurs when the construction of two active, but separate variables (e.g., political party) exists, and some scholars believe polarization may even serve as a balancing act in the United States (Niemi et al., 2011; Ura & Ellis, 2012).

However, if polarization is directly linked to ideology and extreme positions on issues on both sides, it is still unclear whether ordinary people are polarized in their political outlook, especially if they really don’t think about issues which don’t relate to life or death for them (Hetherington, 2006; 2015). Converse (2006) suggested that America is “socially ignorant” and people do not seek to understand issues that don’t affect them personally. While scholars posit there are more distinct parties now than ever, evidence for both partisan polarization and ideological polarization remains (Abramowitz et al., 2003; Abramowitz, 2010; Hetherington, 2015; Levendusky & Malhورtra, 2014). While there is evidence that elites are polarized both in partisan and ideological terms, among the rank-and-file voters it is less certain whether both types of polarization have occurred on the same level (Abramowitz et al., 2003; Abramowitz, 2010; Fiorina, 2009; Hetherington, 2015; Levendusky & Malhورtra, 2014).
What can be said is that several factors contribute to elite polarization. These are: reapportionment, partisan media, primary elections dominated by ideological extremists, external threat increases, which decreases internal polarization, and competition fueling party conflict (Druckman, 2010; Niemi, 2011; Repass, 2010; Shanto Iyengar, 2015). However, public opinion is, as Abramowitz described, moving toward the extremes – there are more liberals and conservatives and fewer moderates with less interest in centrist politicians. Levendusky and Malhortra (2014) assert the media has more to do with polarization, creating a social reality that makes us think we are more polarized than what is real. Trust is a factor, as well, affecting polarization when the policies of liberal activists increase at odds with majority opinions (Hetherington, 2006; 2015; Washington Post, 2014).

Thus, polarization is linked to a political class comprised of elected officials, elites, and activists (Fiorina, 2013). Indeed, policy positions and party identification has increased, alongside self-identifying ideologically (Abramowitz & Sanders, 2003). Abramowitz (2013) asserts that the ideological polarization movement away from the center is due to ideological extremes. Noteworthy are the increases in racial and ethnic populations in America, and the increasing racial divide between Democrats and Republicans (Pew Research Center, 2014). In fact, a recent exit poll showed that 45 percent of nonwhites voted for Obama and only 11 percent voted for Romney (Pew Research Center, 2014). The consequences of polarization affect moderate voices in a political system, leaving those individuals without power and influence in one’s government (Abramowitz, 1994).

**Research Questions**

Communities benefit when their members cooperate to achieve common goals and resolve collective conflicts. But in the United States, racial and ethnic minorities have endured deliberate acts of discrimination and segregation throughout history, affecting incentives among
various groups’ interests and desires to align or not (Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Mills, 1997). Furthermore, the perceived establishment of racial and ethnic disparity socially, politically, and economically has shaped feelings of alienation and political alienation (Cohen, 2010). It is unknown, however, what new racial and ethnic alliances may be formed after a major news event occurs in a community, one in which race and ethnicity were highly salient.

Based on findings, social scientists suggest political alienation is unequally distributed among Americans with regard to race and ethnicity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Denzin, 2009; West, 1997). Racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States are likely to feel alienated, due in part to being marginalized and disadvantaged, more than majority groups such as Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Thompson & Horton, 1960). Whites have been perceived by minorities to be privileged and empowered in their polity for centuries in the United States, thus contributing to racial and ethnic inequality and oppositions.

Additionally, migrant groups tend to take advantage of political opportunities/resources, while creating boundaries between themselves and Blacks (Domke, 2009; Okamoto & Ebert, 2010). In the South, racial and ethnic minorities are complex, due to Jim Crow racial order with the emergence of new minority groups (Delgado, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marrow, 2011). Furthermore, tensions are distinct in regions where Blacks reside and, thus, they may feel threatened socio-economically by incoming immigrants, feeling no need to ally with them politically (Domke, 2009; Marrow, 2011; West, 1997). Given these factors, the following eight research questions are posed.

- **RQ1.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what racial and ethnic alliances have emerged among Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area?
- **RQ2.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what historic racial and ethnic oppositions still exist among Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford,
Florida area? If any, do participants express that such oppositions developed since Martin’s shooting?

- **RQ3.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do politically rank-and-file Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area describe feelings of political alienation?

- **RQ4.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do elite Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area describe feelings of political alienation?

- **RQ5.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what type of media device(s) do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area use to consume news media?

- **RQ6.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites describe their news media consumption in the Sanford, Florida area, including how participants describe their experiences with news media?

- **RQ7.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites remember about this particular news event in the Sanford, Florida area, including the media coverage of the “Stand Your Ground” law?

- **RQ8.** Three years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites remember about other news events outside of the Sanford, Florida area?
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

…face-to-face work, offers the chance to change the direction of a whole inquiry to accommodate new insights, comments made by participants, prompts or patter that turn out to work well (Knight, 2002, p. 50).

The current project’s method is driven by its theory. It employs critical race theory as a framework, which is considered to be a deconstructive, post-positivist, post-structuralist, emancipatory perspective, rooted in critical theory and cultural studies (Baran & Davis, 2011; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). In brief, critical race grew out of the civil rights movement and extended the need for academic studies and activism that focused on the division of race, class, sex, and gender, groups affected by historic racism and discrimination (Delgado, 2000). With its roots deeply connected to critical theory and feminist theory, critical race theory presupposes that certain minority groups of people in the United States do not have the same agency, voice, and opportunity as Whites and that inequality and racism exist and affect all people. Furthermore, critical race takes a dialogic, dialectic approach to storytelling and human narratives to preserve the voice of the oppressed and to retell the story of the oppressed in a more accurate light (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011).

Philosophy attributed to Marx, Kant, Hegel, and ties to World War I, are tenets of critical race theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011). Additionally, Marx’s beliefs that proletariats (e.g., rank and file citizens) should not just recognize abuses of power structures, but they should overthrow systems of elites in order to gain agency and equality in society. This idea contributed to critical theory and its methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011; Israel, 1971; Phillips, 1997). Accordingly, this is a common theme woven into research methods employed by critical race scholars and critical/feminist scholars alike (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011; Israel, 1971; Phillips, 1997). Thus, some typical methodological approaches to critical race
theory tend to employ storytelling and narratives by way of narrative inquiry, focus groups, legal analysis, and in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). This study considers the latter as its method. While many researchers in mass communication, sociology, psychology, education, and anthropology approach critical race via qualitative inquiry, there is a movement among the social sciences to employ critical race theory and its methods to solve present-day critical issues (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

Hence, to answer the research questions for this study, the researcher will conduct in-depth interviews. Leading qualitative researchers have found that human experiences shape who people are, how they see others, and the meanings and experiences attached to each (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Unique to qualitative inquiry is how it brings to the surface rich experiences of lived lives and the meanings associated with such experiences (Patton, 2002). Since both manifest and latent data are sought via qualitative research, researcher(s) enter (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally) into their selected environment to become a part of the experience as an observer and participant of the lived experience (Bauer & Gaskell, 1998; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). And due to the critical nature of this study, the researcher will include her reflexive experiences in the study’s discussion. Collecting narratives for research – narratives defined as the dialogic content collected from depth interviewing – have intrigued the researcher for some time now. It’s the story behind the story, and the layers of stories connecting an individual’s political, cultural, socio-economical and historical accounts. However, it should be noted, that a focus group approach could help to assess the similarities and differences among groups of people, for future studies, especially in examining how racial and ethnic groups respond to varying ideas and topics discussed during the
depth interviews and during the focus group interviews (Craig & Hill, 2008). As a journalist, the researcher can’t deny that her lived experiences drove her into the news industry and played a role in her journey as a student and as a professional.

By conducting individual in-depth interviews, the researcher established a rapport to explore the lives of people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, who have undergone a recent news event that shaped racial history and policy in the United States. Narratives are critical to human socialization. Disciplines outside of mass communications and journalism, such as psychology, sociology, history, political science, and anthropology, have all extracted narratives to help explain meaning in particular lives (Creswell, 2012). The researcher’s unit of analysis takes into consideration the individual interviews and the narratives that may be attained when members of varying racial and ethnic groups gather around the proverbial watering hole to share their personal lived experiences. Her role was transparent and participatory in the research process, to lessen any perceived power structure among the subjects. Thus, she plans to disclose her personal perceptions of “self,” and to be transparent in who she is within the context of exploring the sensitive issues surrounding race and ethnicity.

Often in qualitative research, sensitivity is synonymous with controversy, especially when entering into the private sphere of race and class (Sieber & Stanley, 2012). In the same account, what is private in an individual’s life is often sensitive material. Racial and ethnic minorities have suffered from historic structures of power, where racism is pervasive regardless of whether it is overt or not. For the working class, privacy is frequently bound up with people’s concerns for reputation and social acceptance (Sieber & Stanley, 2012). For example, researcher Rosalind Edwards encountered challenges as a white woman conducting research on racial minorities through the support of an historic, white, middle-class institution, seen as an
oppressive structure of authority (Sieber & Stanley, 2012). Not only was the present project considered sensitive, but the researcher, a white woman, might be perceived to be privileged in some issues surrounding her race and class. In fact, it was important to recognize that the very nature of entering a community to collect data for research positioned her in a role of power among many participants.

**Methods Rationale**

Critical and cultural scholars highly regard qualitative inquiry as a uniquely personal and involved activity that can unveil how people choose to express themselves in daily life (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, critical and cultural scholars respect and have frequently employed in-depth interviews as a method of inquiry throughout the history of qualitative research, securing data about an individual’s experiences, opinions, perceptions, feelings and knowledge. If researchers want to know how people understand their worlds and their lives, they should simply talk to them (Kvate, 2009). Additionally, scholars concur that in-depth interviews can provide researchers with rich insights into the meanings and experiences of media producers and media audiences (McCracken, 1988; Owens, 2004). This study is considered small-scale research, in order to take time to slowly examine a sampling of no more than 30 participants, over hours and, at times days, through extensive in-depth interviewing in the field (Knight, 2002). Some authorities in scholarship, such as Lazarsfeld and Denzin, even posit that research has the potential to give people voice through qualitative inquiry, which interprets human narratives (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Qualitative research is distinguished from quantitative research in its attempt to seek answers not visible in numbers and statistical analysis (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). It’s the story of the human experience that accounts for more than one would know at the surface and reduces data to formulate a story. It seeks to provide information about the social being in many contexts and to build knowledge about the social
world otherwise not understood through data reduced to numbers, predicted trends and probabilities.

Narratives emerging from stories are significant forces behind one’s belief system and subsequent attitudes. Prior research in mass communication and political science demonstrates that media messages influence primary cognitive association to our perceptions of reality, known as social reality, and contributes to the narratives of media consumers (Erikson & Tedin, 2011; Wall, 2008). Ultimately, a person’s narrative on a particular policy issue can be either maintained or shifted through media messages that affect their political behavior. Consequently, derogatory stereotypes in such content may play a critical role. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) conceptualized human experiences as storied lives that shape who people are, who they see others as, and the experiences attached to each. For the purpose of this qualitative study, a narrative is a story and a “portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477).

Indeed, a bevy of literature exists on personally meaningful narratives of Black storytellers. For example, Hall (2009) examined autobiographies of African American print journalists to explore the relationship connecting race, class, gender, and journalism. Streitmatter (1994) discussed the oral histories of African American women journalists who changed history. Fulton (2006) investigated and analyzed women’s narratives on slavery as the triumphs of the Black experience. However, in modern times there is a challenge to traditional definitions of mass media, advancing Chaffee and Metzger’s (2001) research. This research indicates that mass communication should include social networks and the narratives of emerging storytellers,
especially those historically disenfranchised and marginalized (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012; Couldry, 2008; Yin, 2015).

**Research Design Approach**

In-depth interviews are an ideal tool for data collection, particularly when focus group interviews may be affected by the group dynamic, and when there are issues of sensitivity (e.g., race) that may incite anxiety (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Given that the proposed small-scale study seeks to engage with sensitive issues regarding race, politics, class, and history to some degree, scholars recommend employing in-depth interviews to fully understand the lived experiences and meanings associated with such complexities (Knight, 2002; Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008).

The employed theoretical framework views race, and issues affecting racial and class subordination, not as a fixed concept, but as a continuously-shaped concept via political pressures and individual lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Thus, based upon this theory-driven project, its focus on each participant’s feelings about alienation and sensitive issues related to race and ethnicity, the researcher proposes the use of in-depth interviews. Additionally, each subject was offered the option of anonymity (Adams & Sasse, 2001). Furthermore, the researcher conducted 24 face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews in Sanford, Florida (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). The sampling included local population groups of Blacks (cell one), Whites (cell two), and Hispanics (cell three) into three cells of 8 respondents each (McCracken, 1988; Yin, 2015). Within the three groups, elites and rank and file members were noted. Additionally, the researcher proposed a combination of purposive and snowball sampling of residents living in Sanford, Florida, to extract the data necessary to answer the study’s hypotheses and gather necessary information (Kvale, 2009). As such, Creswell (2013) describes a purposeful sampling where the “inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they
can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). Hence, the researcher recruited subjects via a purposeful sampling and then via a snowball sampling. Snowball sampling can assist the researcher in gaining access in an unfamiliar location (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

In addressing how the researcher will enter the field, known as Sanford, Florida, for this project, some scholars recognize the value of and employ an insider, an informant (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). An informant is a person with access to a community who can identify people for the researcher to interview in unfamiliar locales. That person may speak the language of the local area or be a trusted member in the community. As such, the researcher will employ a reporter from the Orlando Sentinel, the local newspaper, to help her gain access to inhabitants of the Sanford community. This particular newspaper not only covered the Trayvon Martin shooting, but was also nationally recognized by the minority and journalism community for its fair and thorough coverage of the news event and other reports. Therefore, an Orlando Sentinel reporter involved in such news reporting would have knowledge of community members to interview and could provide access to them. Other informants (e.g., local nonprofit and community leaders) were used to gain access to areas of the community where certain racial groups reside.

Often, researchers select qualitative techniques unaware of the bicolour experiences that naturally follow (Denzin, 2000; Denzin & Key, 2011). Thus, data can be extensive to collect and analyze in any given qualitative project. Researchers employing qualitative methods may choose to collect objects, stories, images, sounds, historical documents, a bevy of materials to analyze over time, which can grow depending on method, paradigm, and constructs under study. As such, data reduction techniques help create manageable categories of analysis and interpretation
that can yield answers to the sought-after questions. Indeed, there are longstanding tensions between qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Denzin & Key, 2011; Patton, 2002). Researchers seeking government funding and grants, publication, and tenure-track academic appointments, recognize the preference and dominance of quantitative research in mass communication and political science.

However, in-depth interviews are potential agents of social change in critical research through the personalization of individual’s perceptions of societal problems and their narratives about those life experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). When constructing questions for issues that are sensitive, like those of race and violence, I had to be aware of sensitivities that could affect the subject’s answers (Ellis, 1997; Renzetti, 1997; Roberts, 2006). For example, research demonstrates people’s private and public lives are not easily discerned in case studies, in-depth interviews, and focus groups (Ellis, 1997; Renzetti, 1997; Roberts, 2006). In fact, some lived experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences are considered private for minorities in America in order to project a public life that is acceptable for a majority race (e.g., white people in the U.S.) and to preserve their narratives about home and family (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Renzetti, 1997; Roberts, 2006). Due to the historic underpinnings of race in this country and racial matters that have perpetuated to present day, sensitivity to oppressive power structures and institutions should be recognized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; West, 1997). Thus, semi-structured, open-ended questions that allow room for probing is ideal, allowing the subject space to discuss, reflect, and expand on answers throughout the interview.

Also, semi- and unstructured questions are ideal in qualitative research when the researchers are unfamiliar with the environment and subjects and may seek to understand what factors are at play (Yin, 2015). For example, a researcher may casually enter this environment
and spend time engaging in the environment, building trust with the locals and institutions, and asking questions in an unstructured, open-ended style in the process (Brubaker et al., 2006). Research demonstrates that structured, closed-ended questions are ideal for a large sampling, when specific constructs are understood and the researcher seeks very specific answers to the research questions (Kahn, 1957; Leogard et al., 2009). Additionally, other in-depth interviews included in-depth questions used in previous research or the adaptation of questions to the current study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As mentioned earlier, the sampling is a critical factor in constructing in-depth questions. Groups in specific classes, genders, and race require specific language that is understood, and probes that can assist the subject in answering questions he or she may not fully grasp (Seiber, 2012).

Schofield (2002) suggests ways of increasing generalizability via selecting various geographic sites, or locations, to launch the study. For example, since this study will be examining elites and rank and file members in Sanford, Florida, the researcher may choose a specific site where elites, for example, are located in Sanford to initiate study (Schofield, 2002, p. 181). Additionally, the researcher also chose multiple heterogeneous geographic sites to examine for a finding emerging repeatedly in the study among numerous locations in Sanford, Florida (Schofield, 2002, p. 184). Since the news event occurred in the Retreat at Twin Lakes neighborhood, the researcher considered geographic sites close to the community and sites further from the community to increase generalizability. Additionally, the data emerging from the conversations between the researcher and the subject were digitally recorded to free the researcher from excessive note-taking (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). While Sanford, Florida, has been identified as the location for this study, to ensure the subject felt comfortable and in
control of his or her territory, the subject was asked to suggest a local venue where the interview would take place (Creswell, 2013).

Scholars caution against conducting short interviews and suggest, instead, that researchers conduct longer interviews of at least 60 minutes and for one single researcher to conduct no more than 25 interviews (Maxwell, 2012; McCracken, 1988). Seidman (2013) recommends a 90-minute interview, to ensure the researcher has enough time to conduct his/her work and to allow the subject to feel that their time is important and valued. Additionally, there is no perfect spacing to interviews and much of the decision on when and how often to interview will depend on the subject and researcher’s availability. Although, some scholars identify that spacing interviews three days to one week apart is ideal, it is better to conduct interviews in less favorable conditions than not to at all (Seigman, 2013).

The researcher spaced the interviews over a one-month time frame, to meet institutional submission requirements for graduation. Bauer and Gaskell (2000) argue that more interviews do not necessarily correlate to better quality and understanding of the topic. Beforehand, the researcher will first prepare initial interview questions related to the research topic and recognize potential themes, which could emerge from the in-depth interviews and their collected narratives (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Themes will be derived theoretically and they will represent the purpose of critical theory and the current theory-laden research project. While not always commonplace in qualitative studies, this theory-driven study suggests the following key themes and clusters linked to critical race and political alienation (Owens, 2004; Rakow, 2011): racial and ethnic inequality, alienation, alliances, oppositions, connectivity, and influence. Research demonstrates that the prepared key themes will help to guide the interview. New themes
emerging from the interviews should be used in subsequent interviews and in data analysis as the study continues (Creswell, 2013; Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003).

To answer RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ5, RQ6, RQ7, and RQ8 the researcher mainly listened for a combination of verbal answers that expressed beliefs, attitudes, narratives about experiences, and understanding of experiences, including exclusionary terms (e.g., they, them, those) and/or inclusionary terms (e.g., we, our, us), while paying attention to tone of voice and modulation (e.g., negative or positive tone, and drops or lifts in intonation) (Yin, 2012; 2015). Additionally, the researcher observed non-verbal communication, such as the subject’s body language and gesturing to make note of salient concepts and constructs in the participants’ narratives (Knight, 2002). By listening and observing verbal and non-verbal answers from the subjects, the researcher may also demonstrate hidden interrelatedness of subjects’ feelings, perceptions, descriptions, and social cues which she can probe further during the interview and after (Patton, 2002). Since critical inquiry is theory driven by neo-Marxist and cultural study models of race, class, and gender power structures, she was committed to documenting her reflexive observations to align with critical race’s emancipatory process. Being transparent in this process uncovers what is common and what is different in the experiences of oppression and power for the subjects and for the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

To answer all eight research questions, the study connected specific questions in the questionnaire to one another. These included:

RQ1 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what racial and ethnic alliances have emerged among Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area? This study operationally defines alliances as cooperative movements where at least two parties coordinate together over a problem (McGowan & Rood, 1975). Alliances form between invested parties to
balance power and to balance power in a system. Such alliances are often informal, flexible, and perceive an outside party as an enemy or a problem (McGowan & Rood, 1975). In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31) to provoke and probe narratives to answer RQ1.

RQ2 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what historic racial and ethnic oppositions still exist among Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area? In addition, RQ2 probes to examine whether any oppositions have developed since the Martin shooting? This study operationally defines oppositions as the antithesis of alliances and in the context of the disadvantaged and threatened (Gamson, 1973). Oppositions from a critical race perspective consider power as the hegemonic forces found in a society. Oppositions often develop over time and are compounded by force, constraints, fear, and influence or lack thereof (Gamson, 1973). In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31) to provoke and probe narratives about oppositions, the super-ordinate theme for RQ2, in the Sanford, Florida area.

RQ3 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do politically rank-and-file Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area describe feelings of political alienation? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47) to provoke and probe narratives to answer RQ3. Narratives extracted from some interviews with the rank-and-file Black, Hispanic/Latino, and White participants expressed feeling politically alienated from their local political system in the Sanford area, and at times, from their state and national political system. The researcher recognizes that a political system is made up of the government and the governed. Regarding government, there are various levels of bureaucracy that sets and
administers public policy and exercises executive, administrative, legislative, and judiciary power in a community, state, or nation (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). Again, among the governed there are many groups based upon region, language, religion, race, class, sex, etc. (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). In a functioning political system, all these must be fairly integrated. This study recognizes political alienation as an individual’s feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and despair between oneself and the political system of a society. Over months of iterative analysis with the reassembled narratives, the researcher identified three emerging themes, as they relate to a political system: powerlessness, isolation, and despair. Narratives coded for these emerging themes were further reassembled into RQ3’s super-ordinate theme, which was identified as “political alienation.”

RQ4 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do politically elite Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area describe feelings of political alienation? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47) designed to provoke and probe narratives to answer RQ4. Like RQ3, narratives extracted from some of the interviews with the elite Black, Hispanic/Latino, and White participants expressed feeling politically alienated from their local political system in the Sanford area, and at times, from their state and national political systems. The researcher recognizes that a political system is made up of the government and the governed. Again, regarding government, there are various levels of bureaucracy that sets and administers public policy and exercises executive, administrative, legislative, and judiciary power in a community, state, or nation (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). Once more, among the governed there are many groups based upon region, language, religion, race, class, sex, etc. (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). In a functioning political system, all these must be
fairly integrated. Since this study recognizes political alienation as an individual’s feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and despair between oneself and the political system of a society, over months of iterative analysis with the reassembled narratives the researcher identified three emerging themes: powerlessness, isolation, and despair. Narratives coded for these emerging themes were further reassembled into RQ4’s super-ordinate theme, which was identified as “political alienation.”

RQ5 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what type of media device(s) do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area use to consume news media? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40) which were designed to provoke answers from participants about their news media consumption devices and related narratives. Such answers helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in the study, narratives about how varying groups describe each other, and especially, how group members describe their racial and ethnic group and others, since the Trayvon Martin shooting (potentially understood through their described media consumption and related devices). Also, this study recognizes that news media consumption plays an important role in participants’ narratives about news media events.

RQ6 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites describe their news media consumption in the Sanford, Florida area, including how participants describe their experiences with news media? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37) designed to probe participants’ consumption of news and their overall experiences with news media. Such answers to questions helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in this study, narratives about how varying groups describe their news media experiences. In addition, the researcher evaluated how group
members described their identified racial and ethnic group (and those outside of group) experiences through media content and amid heightened media events, since the Trayvon Martin shooting (potentially understood through their described media experiences).

RQ7 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites remember about this particular news event in the Sanford, Florida area, including the media coverage of the “Stand Your Ground” law. In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37) designed to probe the narratives in which participants recall and share (when asked) about the heightened news event, years after the shooting. In all 30 cases, participants were open and interested in sharing their stories about the event. Notably, Black participants, both female and male, shared very different narratives about this study’s intensely covered news event. Answers to these questions helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in the study, narratives about how varying groups described each other, and especially, how group members described their racial and ethnic group and others through narratives about the Trayvon Martin shooting, including those related to the Stand Your Ground law (potentially understood through their described narratives of events connected to Martin’s death).

RQ8 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites remember about other news events outside of the Sanford, Florida area? In-depth interviews included several questions meant to probe how group members recalled events following heightened media coverage that was both violent and racial (Questionnaire numbers 24, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37). These answers helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in the study, narratives, especially, about how group members describe their racial and ethnic group and others through their narratives about other news events after the Trayvon
Martin shooting (potentially understood through their described narratives of news events connected to or like Martin’s death).

Thematic Analysis

The task of qualitative and quantitative inquiry is to reduce research for analysis (Babbie, 1997; Maxwell, 2013). Scholars consider qualitative research effective in data reduction, due to the extensive role of the qualitative researcher in the data collection, reduction, and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative techniques require the researcher to observe the environment and subjects intensely and over a time period, which provides them with a keen understanding and insight into the topics under study. Themes related to the theory are posed prior to the data collection. However, new themes and sub-themes are in an emerging state when the researcher is collecting data and these can be added to the process by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kahn, 1957). Thus, such research adds interpretive value to a qualitative study that quantitative research cannot, and helps to provide a deeper understanding of the topics being observed (Ellis, 2009; Shannon, 2003).

Yin (2012) explains that analyzing qualitative research does not follow any cookbook; neither is it totally undisciplined. He describes how practical experience in doing qualitative research as well as the analytic styles portrayed in numerous texts suggest that most qualitative analysis—regardless of the particular qualitative orientation being adopted—follows a general, five-phased cycle. The rest of this chapter is therefore structured around this cycle, briefly described below. Introduction to a Five-Phased Cycle includes: (1) Compiling, (2) Disassembling, (3) Reassembling (and Arraying), (4) Interpreting, and (5) Concluding (Yin, 2012). Some post-modern, post-qual researchers now argue that validity is less important than once perceived in qualitative research, asserting the in-depth interview experience between the subject and researcher is more importantly followed by an iterative reflexive analysis (Denzin &
Kay, 2011; Bauer & Gaskell, 1998). However, since my study is theory-driven via critical studies (critical race theory), validity is accounted for through member checks throughout the analysis and discussion (Strause, 1979; Patton, 2000). Iterative work done by the researcher is equally critical for the analysis of data.

To further examine the researcher’s method approach, the following explanation describes in detail the process. To begin, the researcher conducted 30 face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, during her small-scale research fieldwork in the Sanford, Florida area over four months (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). The sampling included local population groups of Blacks (cell one), Whites (cell two), and Hispanics (cell three) into three cells of 10 respondents (McCracken, 1988). Within each of the three groups, two respondents were elite and eight others were rank-and-file members. Additionally, the researcher used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling of residents living in the Sanford, Florida area (part of Seminole County), to extract the data necessary to answer the study’s research questions and to gather necessary knowledge (Kvale, 2009). As such, Creswell (2013) describes a purposeful sampling when the “inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 156). Hence, the researcher first recruited subjects via a purposeful sampling in the Sanford, Florida area with the help of an informant and then via snowball sampling. Snowball sampling can assist the researcher in gaining access in an unfamiliar location (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

The purpose of in-depth interviews was to probe and extract narratives from the participants’ stories, which the researcher used to examine and explore how the residents of this particular geographic community at ground zero of a national news event interacted three years
later. In this study, the collected data during fieldwork are the narratives (the stories) that were constructed by the participants through language via a single statement or selection of statements, which may specify beliefs, a person’s explanation of some behavior or an action, a recollection, a viewpoint, or a thought (Yin, 2015). To construct an orderly database of the transcribed interviews, the researcher employed the Five-Phased Cycle as outlined above.

In the disassembling and reassembling of the data, theory-driven emerging and superordinate themes surfaced in the researcher’s iterative work. Along with the five-phased cycle, this study used thematic analysis for its qualitative data reduction, as outlined in Bauer and Gaskell (2000). In thematic analysis, interview narrative texts are reduced over two or three rounds. The first round of data reduction deals with selected passages from the interviews, which are summarized into sentences or stanzas, then further summarized into linked themes and superordinate themes. Next, the researcher recognizes emerging codes from the narrative texts, which are assigned to the related categories and research questions. The coded texts for themes are assigned for each new interview and through iterative work the categories are secured. Additionally, the interpretation of the interview, fused with the “relevance” of the interview and researcher interpretation, compliments the explanatory power of this project.

Researchers assert that the analytic process should occur over an extended period of time, which could consist of months of iterative analysis (Yin, 2015). Notably, the researcher’s exposure to experiences occurring outside of the unrelated study “might serendipitously affect your thinking about one or more of these five phases” (Yin, 2015, p. 245). Yin (2015) and Hahn (2008) suggest that the nature of the initial codes can be understood as “Level 1” codes or “open codes” and that they can vary. After the first round of assigned codes, the next codes can be understood as “Level 2” or “axial coding” that systematically develop subcategories and link
them. Since this qualitative data serves to capture the narratives shared by various groups of participants (e.g., race/ethnicity and gender group) the coded narratives are organized into cells that relate to each posed research question. These cells, consisting of rows and columns, create a matrix of relevant narratives from participants’ original texts, which have been thematized in order to reduce data from the interviews. Finally, frequencies can be observed in thematic analysis by demonstrating how often a theme was present in the reduced narratives of emerging themes and their linkages to a particular research question’s super-ordinate theme (that supports the study’s theory).

Along with the five-phased cycle, this study used thematic analysis for its qualitative data reduction, as outlined in Bauer and Gaskell (2000). In thematic analysis, interview texts are reduced over two or three rounds. The first round of data reduction deals with selected passages from the interviews, which are summarized into sentences or stanzas, then further summarized into linked themes and super-ordinate themes. Bauer and Gaskell (2000) posit that these reductions “operate with generalization and condensation of meaning.” Next, the researcher recognizes emerging codes from the text, which are assigned to the related categories and research questions. The coded texts for themes are assigned for each new interview and through iterative work the categories are secured.

Finally, frequencies can be observed in thematic analysis by demonstrating how often a theme was present in the reduced narratives. In the tradition of qualitative inquiry, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) advise researchers to always be thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating, and reporting throughout the investigation. In sum, for decades, social science research has valued the power of conversations (e.g., in-depth interviews)
to shed light on individuals’ accounts of lived experiences in the social world and the meanings connected to such experiences (Delgado, 2012; Kvale, 1996; Miller & Glassner, 1997).

Oftentimes, researchers overlook the opportunity to observe for negative instances. These are described by Yin (2012) as instances where “uncovering items that on the surface might have seemed similar but on closer examination appeared to be misfits” (p. 191). These very “negative instances” may actually challenge the vigor of the emerging theme assigned to the extracted narrative texts, suggests the scholar, Schein (2003). To further clarify this process, the researcher pulled one seasoned qualitative researcher’s description, below. The researcher found many negative instances, which she coded as the antitheticals of original emerging codes found early on in the research process. These antithetical codes demonstrate how some majority group members’ narratives, and those of some minorities, actually rival themes uncovered in political alienation stories, which adds to the overall depth of investigation. Yin (2012) states:

As a preliminary comment, note that the suggestion to engage in these three procedures, such as rival thinking, again does not imply that you have assumed a positivist orientation (e.g., Eisenhart, 2006; Rex et al., 2006). You may have been exercising an interpretivist and not positivist view (or some other perspective) throughout your research. If so, your use of the three procedures can embrace the same view—that is, how comparisons, negative cases, and rivals might be conjectured given your particular research lens. The first procedure is to make constant comparisons—for example, watching for similarities and dissimilarities among the items in your data—and questioning why you might have regarded the items as being similar or dissimilar in the reassembling of your data (p. 239).

In closing, the researcher immersed herself in the Seminole County community for four months, where she experienced first-hand the area, its residents, and connected with key informants. She kept an audio diary of her personal narratives recorded before and after days in fieldwork. During this time, she interviewed over 32 residents and employed 30 of those for research purposes, via one-on-one, face-to-face interviews, which oftentimes extended over days and included local experiences. Each in-depth interview was conducted using 47 semi-
structured/open-ended questions in Sanford, Florida. Those questions were based on media studies and political science research. Many of Craig’s (1985) depth questions designed for a political efficacy study were employed. Questions can be reviewed in the appendix of this study.

The researcher’s purposeful sampling included a balance of participants from different races and ethnicity, gender, class, and age backgrounds. Through three local informants, she gained access to groups to interview. The first population group was divided into equal male and female participants, further divided into Blacks (cell one), Whites (cell two), and Hispanics/Latinos (cell three) and into three cells of rank-and-file and elite respondents. The second population group continued to use purposeful sampling and snowball sampling to examine the same narratives as the first group about community, political systems, race, efficacy, alienation, and news media, including the focus on the Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman news event. All participants were asked the same questions, including any new questions arising through iterative narrative work. A few of the interviews were conducted via telephone, due to scheduling conflicts and school holiday breaks. All participants were granted anonymity, though many were comfortable using their names.

The researcher recruited each participant over email and/or telephone, using an Institutional Review Board recruitment letter, prior to the interview. At times, the informants reached out to potential participants via telephone and/or email to connect the participants to researcher. That email suggested that the participant contact the researcher via phone, to suggest a date/time and place to meet for the interview; a location that is not the home of the participant and one where the researcher feels secure and safe. In that conversation, the researcher agreed to meet the participant at that location for the in-depth interview. If that location was a coffeehouse
or place where non-alcoholic drinks were served, the researcher offered to purchase the research participant a drink at the interview.

Most of the research participants were interviewed at a location of their choosing (excluding their home or a location where the researcher did not feel comfortable). These locations included libraries, parks, waterside settings, eateries, coffee-houses, campuses, museums and more. The interviews lasted at least 90 minutes each. Some lasted for three hours, while some were continued over days.

Additionally, each interview was recorded through two digital recording devices and after the interview, the recordings were uploaded onto a whole-machine encrypted laptop computer through a third-party transcription software company and saved as data archives for analysis. The researcher used the same password to access the encrypted device password-protected. The backup drives were kept in locked storage areas. The researcher also printed out every transcribed interview to listen to recordings, while reviewing the data and coding for themes. Questions can be reviewed in Appendix C. (Note: The researcher also checked each transcribed interview by listening to the digital recording, to ensure the interviews were transcribed properly and accurately via the software aid.) Thereafter, the researcher employed thematic analysis to break down the in-depth interviews to assist in data reduction analysis that reduced data from paragraphs, to sentences, which served as themes linked to each research question, and finally, into super-ordinate words. The transcript masked personal details revealed in the interview that could compromise the person’s identity to others. In addition to using an assigned code for each participant, names of specific people, groups, and/or places that could disclose confidentiality to other readers were masked, without losing the context of the interview. However, demographic
data was coded to inform the overall analysis, linking participants to year of birth, class, profession, marital and family status, religious affiliation, education, and membership.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Although the researcher used an informant to aid her ability to secure research subjects, not all Sanford area residents who were contacted at the beginning of the study were interested in participating in the study. During the purposeful method, one out of three people either refused to be interviewed or did not return outreach communication. One out of four people refused to be interviewed or did not return outreach communication, when the researcher transferred to her subscribed snowball method. While most of the subjects who agreed to the in-depth interview did follow through with meeting and did participate in the full interview, for each racial and ethnic group, one or two were no-shows and ceased communication with the researcher after not meeting for the planned interview. It should also be noted that the initial IRB process for this study was rather lengthy and involved interview questions, data collection techniques, and research subject protocol were all rewritten multiple times and resubmitted; the original date the researcher expected to begin was delayed over four months.

To protect the identity of each research subject, the researcher coded each person in a way that only race, ethnicity, gender, and class were identified. This ensured that each subject was protected and unidentifiable to the fullest extent possible. The following results were coded into three cell groups of race and ethnicity. Cell one for Black participants uses BL for Black research subjects, F for female, M for those male research subjects, R for rank-and-file or E for elite research subjects. Cell two for White participants uses WH for White research subjects, F for female and M for male research subjects, R for rank-and-file or E for elite research subjects. Cell three for Hispanic/Latino participants uses HL for White research subjects, F for female and M for those male research subjects, R for rank-and-file or E for elite research subjects.
The research combined Hispanic/Latino subjects into one group cell, in the tradition of the U.S. Census Bureau’s use of these identifiers. The research notes that this “ethnonym” that uses Hispanic (from Spanish geographic and historic backgrounds) and Latino (from Latin American geographic and historic backgrounds) collectively is documented as a frequent complaint by those who are of Latin American or Spanish origin and living in the United States. However, such census identifiers are possibly undergoing changes by the year 2020. A Pew Research Center survey found that a majority of people in these categories do not see themselves fitting into the standard race categories. Cohn (2017) reports, “when it comes to describing their identity, more Hispanics prefer to use their family’s country of origin rather than the pan-ethnic terms ‘Hispanic’ or ‘Latino.’”

To further protect each research subject from identifiers, the researcher restricted demographic codes for her personal, secure data, which was primarily used for the researcher’s data analysis and to aid in her research discussion. Those secure demographic codes noted the age, marital and family status, education, class, religion, and community membership for each research subject. For those married with children MwC was used, or for those divorced with children DwC was used. If a research subject was divorced, D was used, and if the subject was married, M was used. If the subject was single or a widow, S or W was used. Education was noted with an ED for college educated and X for high school education or less. Religion was coded, C (Christian), J (Jewish), M (Muslim), S (Spiritual), or X (Not religious). Class was coded as U (Upper), or M (Middle), W (Working), or L (Lower). Also, the age for each subject was coded at the beginning of the code sequence for each research subject. Finally, all quoted texts were transcribed as is and were not altered from their original state to maintain
RQ1 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what racial and ethnic alliances have emerged among Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area? This study operationally defines alliances as cooperative movements where at least two parties coordinate together over a problem (McGowan & Rood, 1975). Alliances form between invested parties to balance power and to balance power in a system. Such alliances are often informal, flexible, and perceive an outside party as an enemy or a problem (McGowan & Rood, 1975). In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31) designed to provoke and probe narratives to answer RQ1. For the purpose of this theory-driven study, after the data was compiled, it was then disassembled by organizing the narratives of participants into categories of gender and race/ethnicity, which were reassembled over months of iterative analysis identified the following five emerging themes: interracial/ethnic ties, progress, cooperation, shared interests, and problem solving. Narratives coded for these emerging themes were further reassembled into RQ1’s super-ordinate theme, which was identified as “alliance.”

Most of the Black female participants described “interracial/ethnic ties” and “cooperation” in their narratives, followed by descriptions of “progress.” There was only one mention of “shared interest” and “problem solving.” Two participants would not answer the questions related to alliances, and both of these Black females moved their heads side-to-side to exhibit a non-verbal response. Additionally, one of the participant’s facial expression was dissatisfied and firm. However, the Black female participants who described “interracial/ethnic ties” in their narratives said, “My sister is married to a fellow that is Hispanic,” and another
one said, “To me, honestly, I’m Black, but I have spent the majority of my life around Hispanics and non-Blacks.” One Black female shared that she was surprised by how, “…a lot of Latinos actually consider themselves Black. And the minority, I feel like it’s the collective minority, not the minorities that are just Black or the minorities that are Oriental. I think collectively there’s a minority.” Black female participants who described “cooperation” in their narratives shared the following:

“Yes (to cooperation among groups), it wasn’t Black people that did it or White people that did it (vote President Obama in); they did it together.”

“I would say, yes, [to Blacks and Hispanics getting along].”

“Yeah, I do witness cooperation among groups. I think it’s growing, I do. I think cooperative movements are growing.”

One narrative from a Black female, coded as “progress” said, “I think some progress is being made, eyes are being opened. I want to thank the media for that. I want to thank the conscientious people for that, like yourself. Yes, that stuff can be done.” Another participant said, “I think it’s growing, but I do,” which was coded as an emerging theme of “progress” in local alliances.

Table 4-1 depicts how often (frequency) Black female participants described in their narratives alliances among the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

Table 4-1. Themes from narratives linking to alliance: Black female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Alliance Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Females (Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interracial/ethnic ties</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the Black male participants described “cooperation” in their narratives to questions that probed to examine local alliances. There were an equal numbers of narratives that were coded as emerging themes of “progress” and “problem solving,” followed by a few narratives about “shared interests” and “interracial/ethnic ties.” Two Black male participants gave the researcher a straight “no” to questions regarding local alliances, and one participant brushed his hand to the side with disgust and looked away. However, one Black male participant who described “cooperation” in his narratives said,

Let me say something to you here, nothing could have been accomplished in this country without the participation of whites and blacks working together. And that goes all the way back to 1865 in regard to the abolitionist movement.

That same participant also shared that in the Sanford community:

…they were going to build condos on this park. Parts of the black community, parts of the white community, came together and said we don't want condos on this park. Our mayor was a developer. Where we are sitting right now would've been.

Other examples of narratives about “cooperation” shared by Black males, include:

“Whites and Blacks worked together in the abolitionist movement.”

Yeah, of course. And then the civil rights movement. How could we have gotten the civil rights act if Johnson didn't go to his friends in the Congress and say, ‘Hey, we gotta pass this act.’ I would say, yes, (to Blacks and Hispanics getting along).

“We didn’t accomplish this stuff by ourselves.”

“[We] Build each other up.”

“In school, we work on projects at times.”

An example of a narrative from one Black male participant, coded as “progress,” described how Blacks from Sanford will often leave for college or other opportunities and return more successful than they were, and, subsequently, contribute to the local community.
“They're thinking about others other than just them,” said that participant. “They've made it and once they've made it, they come back to their community to make a difference.”

Another example of a narrative from one Black male participant, coded as “problem solving,” described how Blacks and Whites in Sanford did not want a particular development in the community near their central park and fought to ensure that such did not occur. “Yeah, and so that was an issue where I worked with the White community aggressively,” said that participant. “And we both won.”

Narratives from Black male participants, which were coded as “shared interests,” described the following:

“When both of us as a group have something that we see as a self-interest, we generally come together, yeah.”

“Somewhat, I feel like it’s the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ (that have shared interests).”

Table 4-2 depicts how often (frequency) Black male participants described in their narratives alliances in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

Table 4-2. Themes from narratives linking to alliances: Black male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Black Males</th>
<th>Alliances</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interracial/ethnic ties</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared interests</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their narratives that examined alliances, white female participants shared “interracial/ethnic ties” most often. All White female participants answered questions, which sought to explore this particular research subject. The emerging theme of “Cooperation” was found in many narratives, followed by “problem solving” and “progress” as emerging themes.
“Shared interests” was only mentioned in one of the narratives among the White female participants.

Given the larger number of narratives about “interracial/ethnic ties,” the following examples were selected by the researcher to exhibit this particular emerging theme in White female participants’ interviews:

“I have friends from different backgrounds here.”

“There’s a lot of females in leadership together.”

“I worked with all of these groups…I got to know these communities through my work with those groups and tried to make, you know, a positive difference in the health and health outcomes of the people in these areas.”

Additionally, a White female participant, one of those who described “cooperation” in their narratives said:

By not working together you're always kind of working against each other, because you kind of embrace that comfort provided by your own race and unwilling to explore the experiences of other people from other racial backgrounds.” Another participant shared that in the Sanford community she has, “…in certain situations, experienced cooperation. But not always. I see this in my workplace, or at least I did. I’ve retired since. That people were working well together.

However, narratives about “problem solving,” shared by White females, did not demonstrate alliances in the local area, but instead showed a lack of alignment to problem solve. The following two examples were selected by the researcher to demonstrate such:

“I don't necessarily see events where different races come together and work together on issues or problems.”

“Overall, I don’t (see groups working together to solve problems). I see Hispanics and Latinos fighting a different form of problems and issues in the U.S. They are facing so many different issues.”
Also, narratives about the emerging theme of “progress” shared by White females did not exhibit progress in the local area, but instead highlighted a lack of progress. The following two examples were selected by the researcher to demonstrate this theme:

“That’s a complicated question. We’ve come a long way, but there’s still a façade of equality.”

“It's a nice place to live, but if you kind of walk around, you will see how it's kind of a segregated town. There's not much diversity happening.”

Only one narrative was coded as “shared interests,” which was described by the participant in terms of community events, where diverse people might participate in an activity. The participant said, “There's not festivals or functions where people of different racial backgrounds come together and share their life.”

Table 4-3 depicts how often (frequency) White female participants described in their narratives alliances in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Alliances Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Females</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interracial/ethnic ties</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>XXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared interests</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the White male participants described “cooperation” and “problem solving” in their responses to questions that probed to examine local alliances. There were equal numbers of narratives from this group that were coded as emerging themes of “progress” and “shared interests” and “interracial/ethnic ties.” All of the White male participants provided answers to the questions regarding local alliances. One White male’s narrative about “cooperation” said,
“I don’t see a major division. So, I would say there is cooperation with these groups.” That same participant also shared that in the Sanford community, “…like I said, I’m not on the government council here or that type of thing, but just interacting with the public, I don’t see a major division.” Other examples of narratives about “cooperation” shared by White males described a lack of cooperation, such as:

“People get into labels for identity. The whole problem is creating labels. When you create labels, you’re creating divisions.”

“I don’t know how you are going to accomplish that. How do you make the Blacks and Spanish and the Whites mingle as one? It’s, yeah, it’s a hard one. How do you do that?”

An example from a White male’s perspective was:

I look at things like we have the worker bee, I call it the worker bee, and the taker bee. The taker bee sits in their little round office and they go, “how can we take from the worker bee?” And they raise their hand and they make a law, and then they take and make a law.

Another example of a narrative from a White male participant, coded as “problem solving” described how local programs were created to benefit all groups in the community. “Basically, it’s through the charitable programs that have been developed by the city, and also, the space that the minorities impact,” said that participant. Another participant described the faith-based community in Sanford working together to solve problems. “I know a lot of the ministers here that I'm connected with different groups and so forth… was helping more in the community here in Sanford…reaching out more to the community and so forth,” he said.

However, another participant shared that with regard to drugs, there was a problem that not being solved together, in Sanford. He said, “The only time there's a problem is when you're in the drug world. If you're getting into the drug thing (or) if you do anything wrong to piss somebody off, you're going to get shot.”
Some narratives that were coded as “shared interests” described religious activities, faith affiliations, and charities as things that people had “in common” and “shared” in the local community.

Table 4-4 depicts how often (frequency) White male participants described in their narratives alliances in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Alliances Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>Emerging Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interracial/ethnic ties</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared interests</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While all Hispanic/Latino female participants answered questions, meant to probe their stories related to this particular research question, Hispanic/Latino female participants shared “cooperation” the most in their narratives about alliances. Next, their stories about “interracial ethnic ties,” “progress,” and “problem solving” were described at a similar frequency. They described “shared interest” in their stories the least.

Given the large number of narratives about “cooperation,” the following examples telling stories about women cooperating, various racial and ethnic groups cooperating, and people cooperating through faith-based structures were selected by the researcher to exhibit this particular emerging theme in the Hispanic/Latino female participants’ interviews:

“Now that I am working, I see that we have small clicks within our groups. Small alliances between Blacks, Whites, and Latinos.”

“There are moments when we all click together a little bit.”
“We work and play with everybody around us. We try to follow Bible principles and our lives that way.”

Additionally, Hispanic/Latino female participants who described “progress” in their narratives said women are making progress in the workplace and that White people are growing more accepting of different “others” in the community. One participant shared that in the Sanford community she, “…thinks a lot of groups feel the same way about things.”

“And we try to figure out what about our local government is something we can do about together,” she explained. “Yeah, we all feel strongly about that (Making progress in government leadership). We would do it; we would work together.”

The following narratives demonstrate narratives extracted and coded as “progress” statements:

“Overall for women it seems we are getting better. There are more opportunities for us all through the wages, even though they are not equal. Things are better.”

“Whites are overall becoming more accepting of whatever is out there. I mean, if they are White (indicating that some Whites look Hispanic/Latino) just seems like they understand us now.”

Also, Hispanic/Latino female participants who described “problem solving” in their narratives tended to share stories about government and historic social movements. Those participants seemed to be proud of their citizenship status, and family members who were citizens (shared via other questions during the interview). The following two examples were selected by the researcher to exemplify “progress” among the Hispanic/Latino females:

“With the Civil Rights Movement, and with the nice people we have here right now, everything here has gotten better.”
“Our democracy allows us to be powerful.”

Table 4-5 depicts how often (frequency) Hispanic/Latino female participants described in their narratives alliances in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>Alliance</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Females</td>
<td>Interracial/ethnic ties</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared interests</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hispanic/Latino females, both rank-and-file and elite, mainly expressed stories related to alliances, which were coded as these two emerging themes: “cooperation” and “problem solving.” Narratives about “interracial ethnic ties” and “progress” were each mentioned three times, and narratives about “shared interests” were described multiple times as well.

Given the large number of narratives about “cooperation,” related to church experiences, immigration issues, news media, and a diverse community, the following examples were selected by the researcher to exhibit this particular emerging themes in Hispanic/Latino male participants’ interviews:

“It seems like we all are working to get the facts about stuff going on in the news. We all want media coverage to be fair and telling us just what happened.”

“I see a lot of mixed race people in our community helping each other out, spending time in church, lots of mixed backgrounds together.”

“With this immigration issue, we can’t afford to work against each other. Everyone knows someone from someone else who wants to be here. It’s, say, community support that makes sure we can stay.”
Additionally, Hispanic/Latino male participants who described “problem solving” in their narratives discussed immigration and church communities. One participant shared that in the Sanford community, “Nobody wants a wall.”

“My sister and I are the first generation born in the United States,” he continued. “These alliances you are talking about, we all feel strongly about that here. And would do everything we could.”

Another Hispanic/Latino male participant said, “At my church, we talk about problems in our community, (and) how they affect our family and jobs. The (2016) Presidential Campaign is important to Hispanics and to other groups here in Sanford. Sanford is paying attention. We are.”

Table 4-6 depicts how often (frequency) Hispanic/Latino male participants described alliances in the community in their narratives, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

| Table 4-6. Themes from narratives linking to alliances: Hispanic/Latino male participants. |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| RQ1 Super-Ordinate Theme | Alliances Hispanic/Latino Males | Narrative Frequency |
| (Emerging Themes) | | |
| Interracial/ethnic ties | X | |
| Progress | XXX | |
| Cooperation | XXXX | |
| Shared interests | XXX | |
| Problem solving | XXXX | |

RQ2 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what historic racial and ethnic oppositions still exist among Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area? In addition, RQ2 probed to examine whether any such oppositions have developed since Trayvon Martin’s shooting? This study operationally defines oppositions as the antithesis of alliances and in the context of the disadvantaged and threatened (Gamson, 1973). Oppositions from a critical race perspective consider power as the hegemonic forces found in a society.
Oppositions often develop over time and are compounded by force, constraints, fear, and influence or lack thereof (Gamson, 1973). In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31) designed to provoke and probe narratives about oppositions, the super-ordinate theme for RQ2, in the Sanford, Florida area.

For the purpose of this theory-driven study, after the data was compiled, it was then disassembled by organizing the narratives of participants into categories of gender and race/ethnicity, which were reassembled over months of iterative analysis with the following seven emerging themes identified: violence, racism, inequality, power, division, others, and a fear of going backwards. Narratives coded for these emerging themes were further reassembled into RQ2’s super-ordinate theme, which was identified as “opposition.”

For RQ2, most of the Black female participants described “violence” and “division” in their narratives, followed by descriptions of “inequality,” “racism,” and “fear of going backwards.” There was only one mention of “power.” All the Black female participants answered the questions related to oppositions. First, one Black female participants who described “violence” in her narrative shared this:

Police brutality. Politics. The way some of the United States citizens feel about the President of the United States and I think that's simply because the color of his skin. Some of the things that he's had to endure, no other president has had to endure and that really makes me mad.

That same participant added later in the interview that for much of Black history in the United States, Blacks active in social change then and now have had a strategy for gaining voice and equality, which was coded as “violence and conflict” in the reassembling of the data:

We conversate. That means we talk it out. Can't talk it out, you agitate. If you can't get that, you demonstrate. We were taught that a long time ago. I still, I'm going to try to sit down and talk with you first. I'm going to try to make some
deal with you first. If I can't, I might just agitate the hell out of you. Most times, it ends right there.

Another Black female participant described opposition understood through media content. She said, “To turn on the news, or not turn on the news, and know that there is a baby missing, whether it's on the news or not, there is a woman kidnapped, there's been a bank robbery, there has been a gang shooting, there has been somebody beat or abused.”

One black female participant described how violence and conflict frequently existed locally. “All of this is in either Orlando or Florida, daily,” she said. Another Black female shared that she was surprised by how much hate was being generated during the 2016 presidential election campaign and asked:

What is Trump saying? (I’ll tell you) Trump is taking that (historic progress in Black communities) and ripping that apart, and people are cheering. We have Klansmen (here, locally) that are closet KKK Klansmen, which is scary.

Other Black female participants whom described “violence and conflict” in their narratives shared the following:

“I believe it’s all the above. I believe it stems from slavery. Stems from years of slavery. I think it stems from generations that have been poor [Blacks].”

“We have so many hate groups here in Florida and in our history that the FBI and CIA, as well as NSA, they’re all located here in Central Florida.”

I think it has certainly increased awareness in both the Black community, and I think in the White community, that life isn’t always fair, and police are not always just. Most of the time they are, and that justice doesn’t always prevail.

The next most described theme of “division” emerged in narratives, when the Black female participants shared that they didn’t feel connected to other groups in the community. One Black female said, “As a Black woman, I don’t know the difference between Latinos and Hispanics. Like I said, I don’t know the difference. What’s the difference?” Another Black
female participant said, “I used to know my neighbors. I used to know everyone on my block. Didn’t you? Now, maybe I know (just) the next-door neighbor.”

Other Black female participants whom described “inequality” and “racism” in their narratives described oppositions like this:

I have to explain to my children that, although this is not fair, yes, a man is able to get up and say what he wants and other people are cheering him. These are adults, grown men, older than my children acting like this. I have to explain some things, so I try to keep up so that I can explain to my grown children what kind of world they're raising their children in.

“Have such a great economic divide and it’s really obvious. And that divide is getting larger and larger. And nobody seems to have a grip on how to cut that divide.”

“I believe it’s all the above. I believe it stems from slavery. Stems from years of slavery. I think it stems from generations that have been poor [Blacks].”

“There’s always things in the news about what’s going on with Blacks.”

Some narratives that were coded as “fear of going backwards” directly described fearing that historic social and political triumphs for minorities are “going backwards” and expressed feeling “like we are taking giant steps backwards” and that “things are getting worse” in the Sanford area.

Since RQ2 also asked participants if oppositions in the community had developed following Trayvon Martin’s shooting, the researcher found that two of the selected narratives answered this question. The following narratives exemplify the question:

“So, the Trayvon Martin shooting really heightened the racial aspect of that event. They turned it into a Hispanic Black event.”

I think that the Trayvon Martin shooting was just part of what's been going on, and what is still going on. It's not going to be the last time. I think that any time something like that happens there's a little bit more division. Then something else happens, and then there's more division. I think there's an increase in things
like that happening, as far as with policemen and people who have clout or whatever.

Table 4-7 depicts how often (frequency) Black female participants described in their narratives oppositions in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Females (Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of going backwards</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the Black male participants described “inequality” and “racism” in their narratives in response to questions that probed to understand local oppositions. There were fairly equal numbers of narratives that were coded as emerging themes of “division” and “others” and “fear of going backwards.” followed by a few narratives about “violence.” None of the Black male participants described “power” in their narrative and all answered the questions examining oppositions in the Sanford area. First, one Black male participant who described “inequality” in his narratives said, “Now, right now, we don't have any Blacks or Hispanics making laws. That’s a problem now. It was one for long time in this country.” That same participant also shared that in the Sanford community and in the United States, “As long as there is mass incarceration of Black males, we won’t be at peace in our communities here or anywhere, really, in America. Don’t think this is something new. It ain’t.”
Other examples of narratives about “inequality” shared by Black males, include:

“Black men, we get set up. Not treated right by police and you know they not Black (the police).”

“Jim Crow feels alive and well here. I’d expect the Spanish to side White, before helping the Blacks.”

“Black Lives Matter (movement) seems to upset folks. That tells you something about opposition, now doesn’t it?”

An example of a narrative from one Black male participant, coded as “racism,” described how Blacks from Sanford will work alongside other Blacks, Whites, and Hispanic/Latino workers, but expressed that not all Whites share that same comfort in a diverse workplace. “There's a segment of the white community that is just racist. Let’s face it,” said that participant. “You know that a person is an African American from the way they talk, the way they carry themselves is what defines them, and people are still scared of that.” Another Black male participant repeated, “Black men, get set up. Not treated right by police.”

Another example of a narrative from one Black male participant, coded as “division,” described how Blacks are not connected to other groups, in the same way that Whites and Hispanic/Latinos are in Sanford. “Things are getting much worse here,” said another participant, whose narrative was coded as “fear of going backwards.” Although, “violence” as an emerging theme was exhibited once, it was shared by a participant regarding historic oppression, which divided minority groups from the White majority, and the conflict around the Black Lives Matter social movement: “Jim Crow feels alive and well here.”

Since RQ2 also asked participants if oppositions in the community had developed following Trayvon Martin’s shooting, the researcher found that many participants expressed
that “things” have been getting worse. Two of the selected narratives indirectly answered this question. The following narratives exemplify such:

“It creates so many other – it causes so many other problems. It creates the confrontation between the law enforcement and the black men.”

“Look at these incidents, and look at these cities exploding (with racial violence), (now) they can get a better understanding of why these cities are exploding.”

Table 4-8 depicts how often (frequency) Black male participants described in their narratives opposition in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

Table 4-8. Themes from narratives linking to opposition: Black male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ2</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Opposition Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Males (Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of backwards in time</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For RQ2, most of the White female participants described “racism” and “violence” in their narratives, followed by descriptions of “fear of going backwards,” “inequality,” and “division.” There was only one mention of “others” and no mention of “power.” All the White female participants answered the questions related to opposition. First, one White female participant described “racism” in her narrative by saying:

I don't like the racial perception in Florida, overall. Sanford and everywhere. Just all over Florida there are still KKK members. It's prevalent. It's loud and boisterous. Public eye. Back in my hometown (Sanford) there are signs of KKK members promoting political candidates and promoting where they're going to be. Talking about all these horrible things. Trying to bring segregation back. It just seems, it's just so prominent in Florida.
That same participant added later in the interview that for much of Black history in the United States, Blacks were active in society:

I think that Black people in Sanford are treated based on these notions. A lot of times there's perceptions that Black people are lazy or they are unintelligent. Then this also leads to ... that because they're lazy and unintelligent they lead to life of crime and that leads to them being profiled and frisked. I think that that could definitely exacerbate it in Sanford.

And another White female participant described “racism” as a part of the 2016 Presidential Campaign saying:

They seem to think since we have a Black President (Barack Obama), that racism doesn't exist and that there is not a problem. Hey, a Black man is President, but they don't really get what it's like for the daily lives of African Americans, for teenagers, for men to, you know, to be feared and looked at differently because they are Black.

Another participant described that there has been, overall, a lack of acceptance of others in the community for much of Florida’s history. However, some White participants shared that racism is an issue perceived by Blacks and/or Hispanic/Latinos, and not one that is “really” a problem. The following narratives is an example of such:

It just seems like they're doing really great. They're doing really well. They just don't seem to have the same hang-ups that Black people have. Black people seem to have some hang-ups with stuff, and (they) seem like they're having a really hard time. You just don't hear about the same violence and drama with the Hispanic Latino community. Blacks, I don't know, they seem like they're really struggling.

The next most described theme of “violence” emerged in narratives, when the White female participants shared that they experienced violence against women, generally. Also, violence in news media was a shared narrative in this group, along with narratives describing violence connected to other groups in the community because “they don’t seem to like each other too much.” One White female did say that, “Well there have been a lot of riots and a lot of protests since 2013 because of the shootings by, of black men by white police officers that
have become very prominent. I don't like that they're happening.” Another participant said about violence and opposition that it is historic and deep-rooted,

There's always been this horrible, racist sentiment throughout the country. It's just shifted from being historical, from slavery, to now, (when) it's just Black people that are systemically disempowered and it's all under government and authority.

Other White female participants who described “violence” and “inequality” in their narratives shared the following, attributing blame to such on minorities:

Aren't they working against each other everywhere? I don't know if it's just this area, or this community. It seems like everywhere there's a lot of problems. You turn on the news, and you just see a lot of fights and violence and issues. They just seem angry. Yeah, they don't seem to get along here, but they don't seem to get along anywhere.

Well, by not working together you're always kind of working against each other, because you kind of embrace that comfort provided by your own race and unwilling to explore the experiences of other people from other racial backgrounds.

Well, I think that there is a perception about black people in general, and that it is illuminated in Sanford. There are these notions around race that kind of shape prejudices that are formed in society. I think that Black people in Sanford are treated based on these notions.

Another White female participant who described “inequality” in her narrative said she noticed opposition locally and “…became very aware of the racial differences and economic differences because I worked with these groups in some of the poorer neighborhoods.”

However, later in her interview admitted that she doesn’t notice inequality and oppositions in her everyday life.

Some narratives that were coded as “others,” directly described feeling optimistic for historic opposition improving in the minority communities. “My expectation is always for things to get better,” she said with optimism. “I try to be very optimistic and positive. There’s been problems. Well, I think all communities are involved in a change now with the political
system.” She returned later in the interview to reference the poor treatment in the workplace of women, and often, by other women.

Since RQ2 also asked participants whether oppositions in the community had developed following Trayvon Martin’s shooting, the researcher found that two of the selected narratives answered this question directly and one indirectly. The following narratives exemplify such:

Trayvon Martin shooting was really just a lot of opposition. That definitely caused significant tension. Made everyone more feel were disparate. With that tension came a lot of upheaval, protests, and chaos. Among all.

You know, I’ve noticed the opposition… But I notice it more when, like, there is a big news story, so (during) the Trayvon Martin case, and I would say right I’ve noticed it more with the political landscape.

I can walk down the street and no one will say anything. I can walk into almost any store and I can look like that day [of the Trayvon Martin Shooting] but no one will say anything to me. But put one of my Black friends in that same situation and it is a completely different situation.

Table 4-9 depicts how often (frequency) White female participants described in their narratives opposition in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-9. Themes from narratives linking to opposition: White female participants.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ2 Super-Ordinate Theme White Females Opposition Narrative Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of going backwards in time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Many of the White male participants described “division” and “racism” in their narratives, followed by descriptions of “violence,” “inequality,” and “fear of going
backwards.” There were only a few mentions of “others” and no mention of “power.” All the White male participants answered the questions related to opposition. One White male participant who described “division” in his narrative described it as such:

The type of opposition I see, we see, is in the council meetings. Much strife between white representatives and others. On discriminatory matters. The media doesn’t help. It’s always existed here. Before Trayvon Martin and after.

Another participant early in his interview said that he experiences division among Hispanic/Latinos and Blacks. Here is an excerpt of what he shared:

I don't know. I don't know that many Spanish people. I've ran into a few, and they don't really associate with other Spanish people. The Spanish people around here they do know are usually working somewhere. The black people are usually hanging out. Every time I see a black person who doesn't have a (job) ... and actually you can see it... I don’t want to be around any of those people.

And another White male participant described “division” due in part to the Black Lives Matter social movement, which was a focus in the 2016 presidential campaign. The following statement was also coded as “racism” and the full narrative of both emerging themes of “division” and “racism” plays out as such:

“They seem to think since we have a Black President (Barack Obama), that racism doesn't exist and that there is not a problem. Hey, a Black man is President, but they don't really get what it’s like for the daily lives of African American's, for teenagers, for men to, you know, to be feared and looked at differently because they are Black.”

While another participant described that there is, overall, a lack of acceptance of others in the community for much of Florida’s history. However, some White participants shared that racism is an issue perceived by Blacks and/or Hispanic/Latinos, and not one that is “really” a problem. The following narrative is one example:

Here, now we're constantly on each other. I see the attitude. I become very judgmental. If you don't judge based on where you've been, where you've
learned. Everything's going to get the same problem again. You prejudice. You're prejudice, because you prejudice based on your experiences. When I see people walking around with a Charlie [inaudible word]. You know, legs out. Because if they're having chicken, they got to get their legs out. I laugh. I just kind of laugh at them. Okay, you want to be different like you want to be the same like everybody else. You're different, but you're not. You're an idiot.

The next most described theme of “racism” emerged in narratives, when references to Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights Movement were mentioned. One White male said, “It frustrates me because, in my opinion, all lives matter.” He continued:

In my opinion, all lives matter and if the Civil Rights happened to make everyone equal, it doesn't matter what your race is, they're kind of [inaudible word] by saying Black lives matter and they're almost saying Black lives matter more than Latinos, or Asians, or Whites, or whatever. They're segregating themselves to put themselves in their own group, but at the same time, as the nation as a whole, we've already decided that all lives matter. The Civil Rights Movement, it was about equal rights and all that

He ended his narrative by saying that he sees a lot of privileged White males trying to outdo one another, in his personal experiences and in the media.

Another participant shared that “racism” was historically deep-rooted and a “curse” on Blacks from “the beginning of time.”

“I believe they had a curse from (beginning) of time to about 1798 – they had a curse. (From) time, from 1798, what did they accomplish? What did they create? Not much. But if you go from 1798 to 2016, what did they create after the curse was lifted?”

One other White male participant described “racism” as an experience, which has been shifting over the years.

I mean, in Florida, is a deeply rooted southern state which has been influenced pretty much by prejudicial feelings, very negative over the past,” he said. “That has seen some positive changes, I think, in recent years with the influx of people from other states who have a more liberal view.

Some narratives that were coded as “violence and conflict” directly described experiences to news media content, local and national, the conflict caused by Black Lives
Matter movement for Blacks and Whites, drugs and minorities, and conflicts among people in authority (e.g., government officials and police officers). Emerging narratives coded as “inequality” tended to suggest that inequality was not affecting their lives. The following are examples:

“I think this exists. I just don’t see it.”

“See, as Donald Trumps, we do this. Any race, we should be excited when they make it to the top of the mountain. We don’t want to hold them back.”

But yeah, I feel that Black America is being put back a class in a sense that they give them more welfare, they give them more food stamps, and less opportunity to get out there and make something of themselves. You see? Same way with White America. Hispanic America. It looks to me like we need to stand up and get that. Get America back to working.

Another White male participant who described “fear of going backwards” in her narrative, said she noticed that the current political situation in the country was affecting local communities and that there needs to be change, while another participant described little progress on social issues since the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

Since RQ2 also asked participants if opposition in the community had developed following Trayvon Martin’s shooting, the researcher found that two of the selected narratives answered this question directly and one indirectly. The following narratives exemplify such:

“I saw a shift [post Trayvon Martin]. I won’t say Hispanic. But I felt there was a shift between Black and White.”

“(Opposition) It’s always existed here. Before Trayvon Martin and after.”

Table 4-10 depicts how often (frequency) White male participants described in their narratives about oppositions in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.
Table 4-10. Themes from narratives linking to opposition: White male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Opposition Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>XXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>XXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of going backwards in time</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this view, Hispanic/Latino females, both rank-and-file and elite, described emerging themes of “violence” and “inequality” in their narratives. Statements related to “racism” and “division” were found next in their frequency throughout the Hispanic/Latino female stories. This particular group said very little about having a “fear of going backwards in time” and “others.” There were no narratives describing “power.”

One example of a Hispanic/Latino female participant describing “violence” in her story said, “It seems like in Seminole county there has been a lot of break-ins and robberies where I live.” She added later in the interview that she felt, “It’s getting worse for the rest of us in this world.”

Another Hispanic/Latino female participant shared that she was concerned and “very upset” about the conversations she was hearing in the news about the United States wanting to put up a wall to keep Mexicans out. In a statement about “division” she said, “I don’t understand all that talk about putting up a wall, like it’s been an issue.”

In the interviews, Hispanic/Latino participants, both male and female, said that opposition among Whites and Blacks was greatest when the Trayvon Martin coverage was dominant locally and nationally. In a narrative coded as “racism,” one participant said, “When
all the Trayvon Martin was going on, things seemed unfair and it was really bad in a harsh way. Honestly, a lot of us had to distance ourselves from it.”

Inequality, mentioned earlier, was exemplified in narratives by Hispanic/Latino females, especially as related to their gender and the difference from Whites. Here are two narratives from the researcher’s interviews exemplifying such:

“How are the Hispanics doing? Well, I think each group, even though we all speak Spanish is doing differently with how much they earn. Not all of us are making equal pay, especially for Hispanic and Latin women.”

“Whites are by far influential in this town, but I don’t see the rest of us benefiting.”

Table 4-11 depicts how often (frequency) Hispanic/Latino female participants described in their narratives about oppositions in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ2</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Opposition Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Females</td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>XXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of going backwards in time</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, in this study to answer R2, the researcher found that Hispanic/Latino males, both rank-and-file and elite, described “inequality” and “racism” to questions that probed to understand local opposition. There were relatively common occurrences of emerging themes related to “division,” “violence,” and “power.” A few Hispanic/Latino males described instances that the researcher coded as “inequality,” as it related to Blacks and to immigration
issues. There were no narratives in this participants’ group, which could be linked to “others” or to “a fear of going backwards in time.”

Racism was a common theme in the Hispanic/Latino males’ narratives. One participant said, “There is a lot of racial profiling and things like that in Florida overall. Well, maybe not in South Florida, but definitely here. You see it all the time.” Another Hispanic/Latino male participant said that he, “…had an instance when I was with a large group of people from his church at a hotel here (in Orlando).

“I was standing next to someone who was White and a female. When I went to check in at the counter, the white women next to me was treated politely. I didn’t feel like we got the same treatment. There was a shift (at the counter), you know.”

Another Hispanic/Latino male participant described experiences of racism and division in the community, which weren’t always overt and obvious.

Here is his narrative about “racism”: “I don’t feel like an outcast or anything, but there are certain behaviors, certain things that you know people think, and they can’t look you in the eye.”

In another story, that same participant shared a narrative about “division”: “Sometimes, I feel people don’t necessary feel comfortable around me. Basically, people tend to stick to their own communities.” One other Hispanic/Latino male described “division” and “racism” like this: “Sometimes people will ask me, ‘are you Dominican, are you Panamanian,’ but a White person will look at me and think, he is a Black American. They don’t offend me at all.” Later in his interview, that same male participant described “violence” in a narrative about his experiences with other minority members. “Blacks are angry, let’s say 50% are angry,” he said. “The younger generation has been molded to be conservative, so they just go along with the flow. I think Blacks can be quite angry.”
Table 4-12 depicts how often (frequency) Hispanic/Latino male participants described in their narratives opposition in the community, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

Table 4-12. Themes from narratives linking to opposition: Hispanic/Latino male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ2</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Opposition Narrative Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Males</td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fear of going backwards in time</td>
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</table>

RQ3 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do politically rank-and-file Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area describe feelings of political alienation? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47) designed to provoke and probe narratives to answer RQ3. Narratives extracted from some interviews with the rank-and-file Black, Hispanic/Latino, and White participants expressed feeling politically alienated from their local political system in the Sanford area, and at times, from their state and national political system. The researcher recognized that a political system is made up of the government and the governed. Regarding government, there are various levels of bureaucracy that set and administer public policy and exercise executive, administrative, legislative, and judiciary power in a community, state, or nation (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). Again, among the governed there are many groups based upon region, language, religion, race, class, sex, etc. (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). In a functioning political system, all these must be fairly integrated. Since this study recognizes political alienation as an individual’s feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and despair between oneself and the political system of a society, over months of
iterative analysis with the reassembled narratives, the researcher identified three emerging themes, as they relate to a political system: powerlessness, isolation, and despair. Narratives coded for these emerging themes were further reassembled into RQ3’s super-ordinate theme, which was identified as “political alienation.”

During the interviews, some politically rank-and-file participants described feelings that contrasted this study’s political alienation definition, and it’s subsequent, emerging themes linked to this concept. Such narratives were coded as either the antithesis of political powerlessness (e.g., narratives describing powerful, power, capable, able, strong, dominant, efficient, effective, and active); or as the antithesis of political isolation (e.g., narratives describing community, belonging, fellowship, inclusion, alliance, connection, and union); or as the antithesis of political despair (e.g., narratives describing faith, peace, comfort, hope, hopefulness, and cheer). These contrasting narratives were of interest to the researcher, and alluded to some participants not feeling politically alienated via their description of such antithetical feelings of political powerlessness, political isolation, and political despair.

As such, the researcher found that most rank-and-file Black females and males did not identify with the political system on a local or national level. Participants did not express feeling that the government and its related entities were penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States. They did not express beliefs that the political authority was legitimate. Most did not feel the political system represented their race fairly, and most did not feel the political system distributed resources in the community equally. As such, Black narratives were mainly coded as feelings of powerlessness. The next emerging theme of despair was found in many of the Black female narratives, followed by an emerging theme of isolation. A few Black females described antithetical feelings of powerlessness and
isolation. The next emerging theme of isolation was found in many of the Black male narratives, followed by an emerging theme of despair. A few Black males described antithetical feelings of powerlessness.

Table 4-13 depicts how often (frequency) Black female participants described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-13. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Black rank-and-file female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Females Rank-and-File</td>
<td>Political Alienation</td>
<td>Narrative Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-14 depicts how often (frequency) Black male participants described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-14. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Black rank-and-file male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Males Rank-and-File</td>
<td>Political Alienation</td>
<td>Narrative Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>XXXXXXXX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As noted at the beginning of chapter, cell one for Black participants uses BL for Black research subjects, and F for female and M for those male research subjects, and R for rank-and-file or E for those elite research subjects. One politically rank-and-file Black female’s narrative of powerlessness by BLFR1 described that she feels like they are not represented racially in political systems locally and nationally. She said, “It’s taxation without representation.”

Powerlessness narratives by BLFR1 participant, included:

“Florida is the biggest state, with a big governor.”

“It used to be the lynching [state], but I think they’ve stopped lynching now. People just kill you; now they’ve got Stand Your Ground.”

Now, there are many of us who feel like – and it has come out that they traded the hood for policeman uniform. Not only a policeman uniform, for a robe, a black robe, they’re judges now. They’re police chiefs and let me tell you, those in Alabama, you can go research it. Last year, last summer or spring, they almost had to fire the whole police department in those in Alabama because they were all part of the Klan and they were planting drugs and everything else on men to get them in jail. Bill Clinton signed the crime bill, right? Three strikes and you’re out. You’ve never heard of it?

One politically rank-and-file Black female’s narrative of despair by BLFR2 described how she feels that Sanford “can’t change.” She said, “Sometimes I think they are taking backward steps, and the reason I say that, we are in 2016.” Narratives about despair by BLFR2 participant, included:

Uh huh. Now, when you talk about privatized prisons, now a lot of these police work for the owners of these prisons. We fill the prisons up with black men and what did Clinton say? He said after that third strike, we’ll put them away and they’ll never get out. Do you think I will vote for Hillary for anything? You might be a Hillary fan, I don’t know. I wouldn’t vote for Hillary if she was the last one. I’ll vote for Donald Trump before I vote for Hillary.”

Things have gotten worse. I don't think our government, at any nation, is going to take care of feeding the poor or the hungry. I don't think it's going to take care of the debt that we're in. I don't think our government is going to take care of what we need as people.
One politically rank-and-file Black male’s narrative of powerlessness by BLMR3 described how he feels that in Sanford “the Black community is gone” and “not represented.” He said, “That's why you get a situation, say in a police department, that's only 10% black and you have a situation like Trayvon Martin.” Narratives about powerlessness by BLMR7 participants, included:

“This political system, well, I read a lot of police reports. Then I pay attention to the media. Just a lot of opposition. Voting is big. At least for me, it is. But we have no voice in government, none.”

“Because you can use a voice, doesn’t mean you have one.”

An example of isolation by one politically rank-and-file Black male (BLMR4) described not even understanding the political system and government, due to his distance from such issues. Another said, “Well, you’d see more participation by Black people at every level of government if they’d be more inclusive… but you put all the money in the White neighborhood.”

However, some narratives described antithetical of powerlessness by BLFR1 participant expressed:

“With the police brutality, I marched against police brutality [inaudible 00:04:17]”

Additionally, some narratives described feeling antithetical to powerlessness by a BLFR8 participant, including:

“When you know how to use (your voice) correctly, where it reaches everyone, your voice is the most powerful influence you can have.”

“As long as you have a voice, you have just the right amount power.”
Next, the researcher found that most rank-and-file White females did not identify with the political system, while politically rank-and-file males did somewhat identify with the political system. These White female participants did not express feeling the government and its related entities were penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States. They did not express beliefs that the political authority was legitimate. Most did not feel the political system represented other racial and gender groups fairly, and they did not feel the political system distributed resources in the community equally, especially for minorities. Some described limited participation; some described having little to no voice or influence in decision-making locally, and/or nationally.

Politically rank-and-file White males did describe feeling somewhat that the government and its related entities were penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States. They did describe beliefs that the political authority was legitimate. Most described the political system as representing their racial and gender group fairly, and they did feel the political system distributed resources in the community equally, though some expressed concern that White males were hyper-competitive with one another for resources. Most described some political participation; some described having voice and influence in decision-making locally, and/or nationally.

As such, politically rank-and-file Whites’ narratives were mainly coded as feelings of powerlessness and antithetical feelings of powerlessness. The next emerging theme of isolation was found in many of the White female narratives, followed by an emerging theme of despair. Many White females described antithetical feelings of powerlessness, followed by antithetical feelings of despair.
The next emerging theme of isolation was found in many of the White male narratives. As stated earlier, politically rank-and-file White males mostly described antithetical feelings of powerlessness; there was one mention of an antithetical feeling of isolation.

Table 4-15 depicts how often (frequency) White female participants described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-15. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: White rank-and-file female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White Females Rank-and-File</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-16 depicts how often (frequency) White male participants described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-16. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: White rank-and-file male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation</th>
<th>Narrative Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White Males Rank-and-File</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XX</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As noted at the beginning of chapter, cell two for White participants uses WH for White research subjects, and F for female and M for those male research subjects, and R for rank-and-file or E for those elite research subjects. For example, one politically rank-and-file White female’s narrative of powerlessness by WHFR1 described that she feels she is not as involved as she once was, as an older, retired female. She also said, “Minorities are not as involved locally as they should be either.” Powerlessness narratives by WHFR5 and WHFR6 participant, included:

“Well, I think oftentimes people’s votes and voices don’t count. And I think that’s undemocratic.”

The government could do better. I think like cultivating a kind of humanity would be, for me, the best way to go about eliminating stress that people face and ignites violent behavior. Maybe just creating a better society where you don't feel threatened and you don't feel the need to threaten other people.

One politically rank-and-file White female’s narrative of isolation by WHFR5 described how she and minorities are connected with each other and have created their own community. She said, “But I don’t necessarily think they are connected to the governing members of Sanford.” Another narrative about despair by a WHFR5 participant, shared that “…there’s a lot of corruption in the government. Everywhere.”

One politically rank-and-file White male’s narrative of powerlessness by WHMR3 described he feels that in Florida, influence is rooted in historic prejudices. He said,

“Sometimes I wonder if the present political situation in our country is affecting the locality so much that we are doing some things that are definitely wrong that need to change.” This was followed by a statement he made that he feels, “Florida is a deeply rooted southern state which has been influenced pretty much by prejudicial feelings, very negative over the past.”

Narratives about despair by the WHMR7 participant, included:
“Honestly, I think the government in America is becoming a joke.”

“Look at our healthcare crisis. As a male, I think, hey what if I need to see a doctor. Something is going on. It’s not just local, it’s national. I just can’t afford $350 dollars a month for health insurance.”

However, many narratives by White females described antithetical of powerlessness, and as participant WHFR6 explained:

Ideally democracy would be a platform where the people can be heard and people can be pursuing a life that's fulfilling in that the government recognizes not only their needs but also their means to pursue happiness. Right?

She added, “Well, when you have a participatory democracy by allowing that you can directly shape or influence the direction, or the course of history that you are partaking.”

Additionally, many narratives described by White males expressed the antithetical of a powerlessness theme, like this stream of narratives about power and empowerment by WHMR4:

“I used to go to City Hall, till the last Mayor.”

“Now, we are going to take a little break. Sometimes ignorance is bliss. If you feel a victim, you’re not.”

“Even back in college, I was in government.”

“I do have a couple thousand political DVDs.”

Well, in college I was a, what the heck is it called? For government. I mean, get rid of government. There's Dependents, Democrat, Republican. There's the... I can't believe I forget this. Starts with a P. Anyway, I was in the group that believes in less government in the 60s.

I'll be a Democrat. I'd be a Democrat for the next 40 years. Dad was saying to us back into the early 90s, “You guys should get involved in politics, whatever side.” He was a Republican. I joined the County Democratic Executive
Committee. I was their secretary. I started to take notes. I'd have to get them in the mail last minute.

Next, the researcher found that most rank-and-file Hispanic/Latino females did somewhat identify with the political system, while politically rank-and-file males did not identify with the political system as much. These Hispanic/Latino female participants expressed feeling the government and its related entities were penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States. They expressed feelings of patriotism and connection to their government, in ways their male counterparts did not. Similarly, they expressed beliefs that the political authority was legitimate, although their concern for 2016 Presidential Elections was described through immigration and Mexico-United States barrier wall narratives. Most of the Hispanic/Latino males did not feel the political system represented their group or other racial, and gender groups fairly on a local and national level. There was little mention by both gender groups, as in the case of other participants’ narratives, about feelings that the political system distributed resources in the community equally, especially for minorities. Hispanic/Latino females and males described some participation, mainly through their faith-based communities; however, some described having little to no voice or influence in decision-making locally, and/or nationally. These participants shared stories about being in close-knit pockets in their communities, where they exercised their political participation in the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States.

As such, politically rank-and-file Hispanic/Latino narratives were mainly coded as feelings of powerlessness, with some antithetical feelings of powerlessness. The next emerging theme of despair was found in many of the Hispanic/Latino narratives, followed by an emerging theme of isolation. Many Hispanic/Latino females described antithetical feelings of powerlessness, followed by antithetical feelings of despair and isolation. The next emerging
theme of isolation was found in many of the Hispanic/Latino male narratives. As stated earlier, politically rank-and-file Hispanic/Latino males mostly described antithetical feelings of powerlessness; there were a few mentions of an antithetical feeling of despair.

Table 4-17 depicts how often (frequency) Hispanic/Latino female participants described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-17. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Hispanic/Latino rank-and-file female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Females Rank-and-File</td>
<td>Narrative Frequency</td>
</tr>
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<td>Powerlessness</td>
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<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>XXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XXXXXXXXXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-18 depicts how often (frequency) Hispanic/Latino male participants described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-18. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Hispanic/Latino rank-and-file male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Males Rank-and-File</td>
<td>Narrative Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
<td>XX</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As noted at the beginning of chapter, cell three for Hispanic/Latino participants uses HL for Hispanic/Latino research subjects, and F for female and M for those male research subjects, and R for rank-and-file or E for those elite research subjects. For example, one politically rank-and-file Hispanic/Latino female’s narrative of powerlessness by HLFR6 described powerlessness narratives by HLFR1 and HLFR participant, which included:

“If you look at the Bible, you can see it’s getting worse. Only the moneyed Whites are working against everybody.”

“I wish we had an honest government here, where there wasn’t any hypocrisy or stealing.”

“Democracy contains all the evils to step on the low ones, or something like that. I forget the quote.”

“Whites are by far influential in this town, but I don’t see the rest of us benefiting.”

How are the Hispanics doing? Well, I think each group, even though we all speak Spanish is doing differently with how much they earn. Not all of us are making equal pay, especially for Hispanic and Latin women.

One politically rank-and-file Hispanic/Latino female’s narrative of isolation by HLFR5 described how she and various minorities are connected with each other and have created their own community. She said, “At one point at my life I said, we could change things, but now I know that like I said, we can’t change anything in the system.” Another narrative about despair by a WHFR5 participant, shared that “…it seems like in Seminole County, things are getting worse for us.”

One politically rank-and-file Hispanic/Latino male’s narrative of powerlessness by HLMR7 described how he feels that in Florida, influence is for White people. He said, “We do
not have any influence in Sanford. Blacks don’t either. Just the Whites in this community. Actually, probably all over Florida, I would say.”

Narratives about despair were also described by an HLMR3 participant, including:

“I would say they are united, Blacks and Whites, because now we are all targets.”

“Stand your ground, oh that only works when a White person shoots a Black one when you are standing your ground.”

However, many narratives by Hispanic/Latino females described antithetical feelings of powerlessness, as participant HLFR6 expressed:

At my church, we talk about problems in our community, how they affect our family and jobs. The presidential campaign is important to Hispanics and to other groups here in Sanford. Sanford is tuned in. We are.

“It seems like we all are working to get the facts about stuff going on in the news. We all want media coverage to be fair and telling us just what happened.”

“Yeah, if we feel strongly about something, we would probably do something about it.”

Additionally, many narratives described by Hispanic/Latino males expressed antithetical ideas of powerlessness, like this narrative about power and empowerment by HLMR4:

“I would love to figure out our local government, then see if other groups feel the same way. Make a plan to fix a problem here together.”

RQ4 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do politically elite Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area describe feelings of political alienation? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47), designed to provoke and probe narratives to answer RQ4. Like RQ3, narratives extracted from some of the interviews with the elite Black, Hispanic/Latino, and White participants expressed feeling politically
alienated from their local political system in the Sanford area, and at times, from their state and national political systems. The researcher recognized that a political system is made up of the government and the governed. Again, regarding government, there are various levels of bureaucracy that set and administer public policy and exercise executive, administrative, legislative, and judiciary power in a community, state, or nation (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). Once more, among the governed there are many groups based upon region, language, religion, race, class, sex, etc. (Sharma & Sharma, 2000). In a functioning political system, all these must be fairly integrated. Since this study recognizes political alienation as an individual’s feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and despair between oneself and the political system of a society, over months of iterative analysis with the reassembled narratives, the researcher identified three emerging themes: powerlessness, isolation, and despair. Narratives coded for these emerging themes were further reassembled into RQ4’s super-ordinate theme, which was identified as “political alienation.”

During the interviews, some politically elite participants described feelings that contrasted this study’s political alienation definition, and it’s subsequent, emerging themes linking to this aforementioned concept. Such narratives were coded as either the antithesis of political powerlessness (e.g., narratives describing powerful, power, capable, able, strong, dominant, efficient, effective, and active); or as antithetical to political isolation (e.g., narratives describing community, belonging, fellowship, inclusion, alliance, connection, and union); or as the antithesis of political despair (e.g., narratives describing faith, peace, comfort, hope, hopefulness, and cheer). These contrasting narratives were of interest to the researcher, as well, and alluded to some participants not feeling politically alienated via their description of such antithetical feelings of political powerlessness, political isolation, and political despair.
The researcher found that the elite Black females and males identify very differently in the political system on a local and/or national level. Both elite Black participants described not feeling the government and its related entities were penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States. However, some elite Black male participants were engaged in community leadership and were actively politically participating. Elite Blacks did not express beliefs that the political authority was legitimate. Both described feeling that the political system did not represent their race fairly, and both described feeling that the political system, locally and nationally, did not distribute resources in and outside the community equally.

As such, the narratives of elite Blacks were mainly coded as feelings of powerlessness. There was one narrative coded as despair for the elite Black female, and some narratives for this group coded as antithetical feelings of powerlessness and isolation. The next emerging theme of despair was found in some of the elite Black male narratives, followed by the emerging theme of isolation. An elite Black male participant described in one narrative an antithetical feeling of powerlessness. Overall each Black elite participant addressed the related political alienation questions through longer, more descriptive narratives and addressed their own race and other group minorities in their answers.

Table 4-19 depicts how often (frequency) the Black female elite participant described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-20 depicts how often (frequency) the Black male elite participant described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.
Table 4-19. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Black elite female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation Narrative Frequency</th>
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<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
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<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
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</table>

Table 4-20. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Black elite male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Male Elite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Next, the researcher found that the elite White female and male identify very differently in the political system, on a local and/or national level. Both elite White participants described not feeling the government and its related entities were penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States, but both described their power and internal and external efficacy, nonetheless. Both elite Whites were engaged in community leadership and actively participated in the political process. They did not express beliefs that the political authority was legitimate. Both described feeling that the political system did not represent other racial and ethnic groups fairly, and elite Whites described feeling that the political system did not distribute resources to other racial and ethnic groups in and outside the community equally.
As such, the narratives of elite Whites were mainly coded as antithetical feelings of powerlessness. However, worth noting is the finding that many of the elite White female’s narratives were coded as powerlessness, as the concept relates to other females and other racial/ethnic backgrounds. There was one narrative coded as an antithetical feeling of isolation for the elite White male, and some narratives coded as antithetical feelings of powerlessness and isolation. Overall, each White elite participant addressed the related political alienation questions through longer, more descriptive narratives and addressed other racial and ethnic groups often in their answers.

Table 4-21 depicts how often (frequency) the White female elite participant described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Female Elite</td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-22 depicts how often (frequency) the elite White male participant described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

The researcher found that the elite Hispanic/Latino females and males identified in a similar way to one another in their political system on a local and/or national level. Both elite Hispanic/Latino participants described feeling the government and its related entities were
somewhat penetrating their life as residents of the Sanford area and as citizens of the United States. However, both participants described concern about the division the 2016 Presidential Campaign might bring to their ethnic community. The elite Hispanic/Latino male participant was engaged in community leadership via his church and that same Hispanic/Latino participant was a leader through his past non-profit work in the Orlando area. Both described themselves as actively participating politically. The elite Hispanic/Latino participants did not express beliefs that the political authority was legitimate. Both described feeling that the political system locally did not represent their race fairly. However, on a state and national level, they believed they were represented. Both described feeling that the political system, locally and nationally, did not distribute resources in and outside of the community equally, but they described the issue as relating to class and not race.

Table 4-22. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: White elite male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Male Elite</td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of powerlessness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Despair</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Antithetical of despair</td>
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</table>

As such, elite Hispanic/Latinos’ narratives were mainly coded as antithetical feelings of powerlessness. However, worth noting is the finding that many of the elite Hispanic/Latino female’s narratives were coded as powerlessness, as the concept relates to other females and other racial/ethnic backgrounds. There was one narrative coded as an antithetical feeling of isolation for the elite Hispanic/Latino female, as it related to the self-interest of Hispanic/Latinos in local representation, outside of religious groups. There were some
narratives coded as antithetical feelings of powerlessness and despair, in speaking about women rising in national politics and employment mobility for group members. The Hispanic/Latino elite male shared that he was seeing so many young adults go to, and finish, college, and he described feeling despair over the future of immigration in the U.S. Overall each Hispanic/Latino elite participant addressed the related political alienation questions through longer, more descriptive narratives than Hispanic/Latino rank-and-file participants.

Table 4-23 depicts how often (frequency) the Hispanic/Latino female elite participant described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

Table 4-23. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Hispanic/Latino elite female participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4 Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation Narrative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Female Elite (Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of Powerlessness</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of Isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of Despair</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-24 depicts how often (frequency) the Hispanic/Latino male elite participant described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes, which were found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting years later.

For example, the elite Black female BLFE9 describes having a certain level of power in her community via her ability to affect and influence positive change with regards to community issues. She admits to wanting to focus on political issues, but because of her leadership role in a local nonprofit, she cannot. If possible, she would. Additionally, she describes her neighborhood as connected and safe. “I live in a great neighborhood, and if I see
Table 4-24. Themes from narratives linking to political alienation: Hispanic/Latino elite male participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ4</th>
<th>Super-Ordinate Theme</th>
<th>Political Alienation Narrative Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Male Elite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Emerging Themes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of Powerlessness</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of Isolation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithetical of Despair</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a car that looks like it could be threatening, full of older or even a group of young White boys, or to be quite honest, if I see a policeman who seems to be circling,” she said, “I will hang out and make sure that those boys get to where they’re going to be, and they get there just fine.”

She adds, “I’m a mom, I’m a XX-year-old professional mom, so the cops are a whole less likely to take me on than they are to take them (young Black males) on.” Additionally, coded as an emerging theme of despair, BLFE9 shares that she feels despair over the community’s “public discourse” and that “it’s gotten so out of control.” Later in the interview, the elite Black female makes a connection to President Obama’s family, demonstrating power and influence:

Any time the First Family does something, there’s certainly a pride in that, the relationship between the husband and wife, the fact that Barack is president. The girls are beautiful. They’ve grown into these beautiful young ladies right in front of our eyes, and Michelle dresses fabulously.

However, she ends her interview with a narrative, in which the researcher coded as an emerging theme of powerlessness, isolation, and despair:

I understand that A, we live in a republic, not a democracy, but I do understand that the majority has, for the entire history of America, for the most part, has run the country. By the majority, I mean White males have run the country, and now just demographically, the country is changing. The nation is changing demographically, so I guess the White male … because they’re going to have to share this power that has been their little private domain with other groups. It’s
just unnatural because nobody ever wants to give up power. Nobody ever wants to share power. That’s where I see America now.

Next, narratives from an elite Black male interview BLME10 started off describing emerging themes of isolation and despair, but later described the antithetical feelings of powerlessness in local and national political systems. The following narratives illustrate this:

“Things are overall getting worse.”

Even after Obama got into office, it was like now all of a sudden now there was—people are more happy with being a racist. I think going on Facebook or you know the news media if you look and I like to just sit there sometimes and read the comments of people. Read their (racist) comments.

You go up to a Black community, all we have is in our Black community and that's it. It's not like you're going to frequent that area, you're not going to have others frequent that area in the Black community because first off it's going to be a fear and then there's also going to be you know what I'm saying, them saying that stereotype that's causing that fear as well.

“It’s almost like, it’s never going to happen (connectivity and equality) because it’s been set up that way.”

“I'm a doer and not ... I'm a doer. I'm not a complainer. You have people who sit here and complain all damn day about oh this ain't happening or this or that.”

“I'm going to go out and make it happen. If I can't make ... if I can't influence the decision, I'm going to help to make the decision.”

That's one of the main reasons why I'm running for office because as I kept stating, you know what I'm saying, the representation for our people is not like the haves and have nots, it's like even for the Hispanics and the Blacks ... The Hispanics and the Blacks that are in our community, you know what I'm saying, they're not represented, you know fully.

Narratives lifted from an elite White female interview WHFE9 did and did not express feeling politically alienated with the local and national political system, weaving in and out of
the emerging theme of powerlessness and the antithetical feeling of powerlessness theme. The following narratives illustrates such:

“Politically, I don’t really agree with our governor and the way he is going. …does not show the kind of leadership that can address, the way I think it should be addressed.”

“I do see the local minority group as rising in their power. I still think there’s a lot of white privilege out there, but some people don’t see it.”

I think in general, like originally the whole Black and White [modern social movement] and all of that? I don't think that the white population of this country...

“I mean, I vote in every election, so I exercise my rights that way and depending on the issue ... I don't feel it is too harsh, but I have, you know written... I've done emails to, like Congressional Representatives.”

I poke too little though. I feel like there is too much money in politics and Government right now and it really has drowned out the voice of the people. If you look at American population and look at what they really think, I feel like there is too much corporate money and business money that is drowning out the voices of regular people and minorities.

Next, narratives lifted from an elite White male participant (WHME10) interview did not express feeling less politically alienated with the political system, and he addressed his faith as what undergird his influence and understanding of power and contentment. The following emerging themes illustrate narratives coded as antithetical of isolation and powerlessness via description of the powerlessness of minority groups:

You know, that's an interesting question (about government and power) in itself because I have that opportunity every day to change. I choose to change. It's all about choice. It's not about opportunity. We have the opportunity. If somebody is feeling that they're not doing the right thing, well you have that opportunity, you have that choice to do the right thing.
A lot of people will say, “I'll be happy when I win the lottery.” Or “I'll be happy when Friday night comes around. I got my girlfriend.” You got the choice to be happy right now. Abraham Lincoln quoted that.

Yeah. I do too. You always learn something off it. But yeah, I feel that Black America is being put back a class in a sense that they give them more welfare, they give them more food stamps, and less opportunity to get out there and make something of themselves. You see? Same way with white America. Hispanic America. It looks to me like we need to stand up and get that. Get America back to working. They're probably spending many trillions of dollars. Why haven't we gotten this thing taken care of?

The Bible teaches that us that we do have a right to stand even in the last day, and obviously we still make that choice to choose death. I believe it was ... Who was it said “Give me liberty or give me death?” I want to say ... His name is on the tip of my tongue. We still have that right to give me liberty or give me death. Even on a political side. I'm going to choose give me liberty or give me death is my final answer.

“I feel people like in general, this day and age, because of the way the government is being ran that we have too little power, but we need to gain that power back.”

Narratives lifted from an elite Hispanic/Latino female interview (HLFE9) did and did not express feeling politically alienated with the local and national political system, weaving in and out of the antithetical themes of powerlessness and despair. The following narratives illustrate such:

“I think we have the right to write letters, we have the right to practice petitioning of our local government, and also the right to support others.”

“I'm not sure where it would go, but I would hope that I would have a voice, but I think it takes many voices.”

By participating in church activities, I’m engaged in leadership. We have outreach into various groups of under-privileged inner communities. My work in the community has always been about outreach and change.

The biggest issues right now for Hispanic/Latino women is to seek out pay scales jobs that can take care of us. I don’t know if Sanford is making a difference for women. Men are working jobs with higher pay for the county,
while it seems women in this area take two jobs and raise families. Why isn’t anyone noticing this here?

Next, narratives lifted from an elite Hispanic/Latino male participant (HLME10) interview did not express feeling less politically alienated with the political system, and he addressed his faith as what undergird his influence and understanding of power and contentment. The following emerging themes illustrate narratives coded as antithetical of isolation and powerlessness via description of the powerlessness of minority groups:

I tell my friends at church, we can get a contact who is very much involved in county commission. Get our community’s voices heard. If immigration problems threaten our community, we can always protest, things like that. And I would absolutely vote against preventing people from pursuing a better life. Our vote counts.

And I think that a lot of times police officers and other people in positions of authority but not great power tend to abuse the little bit of power that they have and it starts ruining the system [inaudible 00:02:00] and that's very undemocratic.

RQ5 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what type of media device(s) do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area use to consume news media? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40) which were designed to provoke answers from participants about their news media consumption devices and related narratives. Such answers to questions helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in the study, narratives about how varying groups describe each other, and especially, how group members describe their racial and ethnic group and others, since the Trayvon Martin shooting (potentially understood through their described media consumption and related devices). Also, this study recognized that news media consumption played an important role in participants’ narratives about news media events. All participants described themselves as media users, irrespective of race/ethnicity, gender, class,
and age – even though a few chose not to consume news regularly. Most participants turned to the Internet on their cell phones and computer for their news, frequenting social media sites and online news sites at least once day. Many shared that they were often on some type of media device all day long. Generally, females described their news experiences in more depth and described an interest in news, more than males did across all racial and ethnic groups.

Table 4-25 depicts how often (frequency) participants from each groups described narratives about the news media consumption device and platform they turned to for news content, years after Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

Table 4-25. News Media Consumption Device

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ5 Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Black Female Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>White Female Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino Female Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Black Male Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>White Male Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino Male Frequency of Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV News</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet (News Sites)</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phones (News Sites)</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phones (Social Media)</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet (Social Media)</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper (Hardcopy)</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
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</table>

Black females described mainly using television and the Internet to get their news via national media networks or online news sites (e.g., CNN and NBC). They turned equally to
their cell phones and the Internet to read news via social media sites. A few described using their cell phones to read news from media websites, and even fewer described listening to news on their radio or reading news via hardcopy newspapers. Black males seemingly described very similar news media consumption devices.

For example, Black female participant (BLFR1) shared that she mainly gets her news via television and the Internet and sometimes through hardcopy newspapers. But later, she stated that she was not reading print news too much currently. “I just go online and read articles on the New York Times,” she said. Another Black female participant (BLFR5) said she is reading news all the time on social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter. She added, “…so I get the real answers and not something that’s not real news.” Another Black female participant (BLFE9) said, her life revolves around news. “If the news is on, I am on,” she said. She uses the television, radio, Internet, and her cell phone to consume media content. She shared the following:

Why, it’s tough. I wake up to the television, then we get to my car and I switch to radio or my iPhone when I come to a stoplight. I get to the office, I have a TV there, so it comes on there, and then if I see something on TV, or catch the tail end of something, and if I’ve missed the whole story, I just go to the internet.

Black males described mainly using television and the Internet to get their news via media networks or online news sites. They equally turned to their cell phones and the Internet to read news via social media sites. A few described using their cell phones to read news from media websites, and even fewer described listening to news on their radio, or reading news via hard copy newspapers.

For example, one Black male participant (BLMR3) said that he prefers to get his news on the television or via Internet magazine sites. He does not read the news on his phone and added that he feels “Twitter is a waste of time.”
“I like in-depth news,” he said. Another Black male participant (BLMR4) described being disinterested in paying attention to news generally. However, he shared that sometimes he would use the television for news, but never would read news on the Internet. Participant BLMR7 said that he listens to NPR all day long. He does so through his phone, his computer, through social media sites, and the radio, which he has on most of the time, all day long. “I split between Internet and phone for my news,” he said. Finally, Black participant BLMR10 said that he tunes into news every single day, and at times two or three times during the day on his phone or on his computer. “Anytime the news is on, I pay attention,” he said, adding that he likes to read the news on Facebook and other social media sites.

The researcher found that White females were most likely to turn to the Internet to consume news via news sites. They described using their cell phones to read those news sites and social media sites, and the Internet to read news via social media sites equally. A few described turning to radio for news and only one White female participant described her news media consumption through a hardcopy newspaper.

Additionally, one White female participant (WHFR2) said she doesn’t turn the news on her television or radio, but her parents do every day. She described reading news on Twitter, Facebook, and other news sites all day. “Like, Facebook. If someone posts something, definitely. Twitter. Yeah, I hear it on campus when it's on in the buildings. I tune in all day long, but it's just because I'm on social media all day long.”

Later in the interview, that participant shared that if news pops up on her phone, she is likely to pay attention to it. However, White female participant WHFR6 said she tries to limit her exposure to news. She described not watching too much television and rarely tunes into local news channels. However, she does listen to some news podcasts:
Regularly, I usually listen at least twice or three times a week, Democracy Now. We always get coverage of what's happening. I use social media, like Twitter and Facebook, but I'm really gearing toward like other information sources other than news. Democracy Now, and Podcasts.

Another White female participant (WHFE9) described consuming news via multiple news media devices. While she once received a subscription to a local hardcopy newspaper, now she likes reading news on her cell phone and on her computer. She starts her day by consuming news from the Today Show and frequently checks the CNN iPhone app throughout the day. Additionally, she added that she might check the USA Today website on her phone or computer, and she admits that she gets most of her news through her iPhone apps and some via social media sites.

Out of all participants, White males described turning to the television for news media consumption the most. Next, they described reading news in their hardcopy newspapers more than any participants. They described using the Internet to read news off media websites and social media sites, alongside listening to the radio for news. Also, White males turned to their cell phones for news sites and social media the least of all the participants. White male participant WHMR7 said he doesn’t consume news as much as he should. “I probably watch or tune in to the news maybe an hour or two a week,” he said. He described turning to the television and social media on his computer for his news. He does not consume news on his phone at all.

Additionally, White male participant WHMR8 described using news media devices a lot for his news. He said that he was a mainstream conservative, which leaves him with only one news channel, compared to what he imagines to be 25 or more liberal news media channels. He described watching news on the television, listening to his radio, reading news on
his laptop, but he does not get his news via his cell phone. “I’m old school. I don’t like things following me, like Facebook and all that stuff.”

Finally, white male participant WHME10 said he likes reading the Drudge Report on the Internet and watching news via ABC, NBC, and BBC. He said, “Like if you’re a reporter, you go to The Drudge Report to see what you want to speak on, what you want to put in the newspaper or on the news.”

Hispanic/Latino participants, both male and female, shared similar media devices for their news consumption with one another, with the exception that Hispanic/Latino females described tuning into news more often. Both males and females described that they watched news on their televisions and on their computers. The Hispanic/Latino identified group members described searching for news on their cell phones via online news sites and social media platforms. A few Hispanic/Latino females shared that they tuned into radio stations, mainly local ones that were either NPR or Christian stations, to get their news; there was one instance when a Hispanic/Latino female described getting her news from a hardcopy newspaper. Conversely, Hispanic/Latino males described reading their morning newspaper print edition, and there was one instance that described a Hispanic/Latino male who tuned into radio for news, citing NPR, as well.

In another instance, one Hispanic/Latino female participant (HLFR2) said, “No newspaper. I do watch TV news. CNN mostly. No radio. I was listening to NPR a little while, but it’s been a bit.” She added that her family frequently watches television news. And another Hispanic/Latino female participant described listening to radio for news content. “I tend to listen to radio to Christian stations,” she said, “and whatever news I hear there.” A few Hispanic/Latino male participants described enjoying “still” getting the morning newspaper,
while others shared that they check their emails on their computers for local news, and check their cell phones for national news coverage.

RQ6 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites describe their news media consumption in the Sanford, Florida area, including how participants describe their experiences with news media? In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37) that were designed to probe participants’ consumption of news and their overall experiences with news media. Such answers to questions helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in this study, narratives about how varying groups described their news media experiences, and especially, how group members described their identified racial and ethnic group experiences (and those outside of the group) through media content and amid heightened media events, since the Trayvon Martin shooting (potentially understood through their described media experiences).

First, Blacks generally did not describe positive experiences with media, even though Black females were frequent consumers of news. For example, Black female participant BLFR1 extensively described her distrust with the news media. She said most of the news on the Trayvon Martin shooting was not reported. She added that newspapers do not want to write what they do not know about. She described that the newspapers sent reporters into their local black community to speak with folks, but the Black community wasn’t going to talk to reporters or to the police. She described Blacks fearing that if they spoke to the police or to reporters, they would be set up and could potentially be harmed (for example, by other Hispanic/Latino and White group members living in the community.) Additionally, she described that since the shooting took place in a gated community, where there were Section 8 residents (i.e., those who received rental assistance for low-income), the Section 8 participants
feared they could be kicked out of their apartment or set up with drugs in their apartment to get them removed. She described Black people not talking to anyone in the community out of fear. She said, “They’re not going to talk.”

Two other Black female participants described their experience with news media as a disappointment. BLFR2 said, “I look at the news and shake my head. I just shake my head. You know. I have to turn that mess off. Because I go to bed and have to rethink that stuff.” BLFR5 described the news media as being insensitive to the issues affecting their communities and their families. She said that reporters do not consider human and moral issues the way they should. Finally, Black participant BLFE9 described her news media experiences as frequent and daily and as educational tools for her personal and professional interest:

Here’s the deal. I understand that there’s a difference between news and commentary, and I certainly see the information that comes across social media does not mean that I believe it is 100% accurate. If I see something that is interesting, then I will probably go research it somewhere else to find out if it’s true, or if it’s some crazy internet thing that somebody’s made up.”

One Black male participant (BLMR4) said that the news media projects a feeling in their content that all this “blowing up of people is normal.” “Like Trayvon. Like it’s happening everywhere because we see it on the news for years. And they make it look like a Black thing. I’m better off not paying attention to news and just doing my thing.”

Other Black male participants described their experience with news media as overwhelming. For example, Black male participant BLMR7 described feeling that there was too much news being disseminated to keep up with, while Black male participant BLMR8 described feeling overwhelmed by how long the media had been in their community after the shooting. The research found, that Black male participant BLMR10 described the news media
as being “too” negative and aggravating. He expressed frustration over not having access to positive news and feels the news media in Sanford has a tendency to be “racist” and “ugly.”

White females, overall, described news media experiences as positive ones, which helped to disseminate information into the community to bring about change. White female participant WHFR1 said that journalists “help to bring about change around the world” and that they include all racial and ethnic groups in their content equally.” However, White female participant WHFR5 described how the news media locally and nationally tends to “stir up a lot of tension” among various groups. “With that tension comes a lot of upheaval, protest, and chaos,” she said. “That doesn’t work for anyone anymore.”

Next, White female WHFR6 described how while living in Sanford, she can’t ignore the large presence of media and the constant coverage they’ve had, since the Trayvon Martin shooting:

Everybody was calling to ask, friends outside of Florida, about what happened and... Well, I remember that on the front page of the newspaper was always about the case and proceedings and the trials. The TV was almost 24/7. It was kind of sickening and overwhelming, and we just tuned out because we couldn't take it anymore.

In contrast, White male participant WHMR3 described several instances reported on locally that made him feel “great.” Overall, he felt that news media was “an entity for good” and conducts professional work. He added:

Seems in our local news there’s a sense of dedication to share good stories about local growth in the Sanford community. It gives me a strong sense of satisfaction that things are going be better here one day. Maybe not in my time. I remember the news media trying to be as neutral as possible in their reporting of the incident (of Trayvon Martin). In some instances, they failed.

While two of the White male participants admitted to not tuning in to news media as much as they should, they both described their experiences as limited and reaffirming of their beliefs about the shortcomings of minority groups (e.g., distribution of welfare, other social
aid). White male participant WHME10 described his news media experiences as prophesies from the Bible. He said that he knows, “…what's going to take place in the news, because I read it in the Bible. Isn't that amazing?”

Hispanic/Latino females described their news experiences as “not too great.” One participant, HLFR3, said, “I have to admit, it’s not great. I am disappointed.” Another Hispanic/Latino female, HLFR4, said, “I will check the email that I get from the local news station. I do that every day, then I go to Twitter and CNN on my cell phone and my computer throughout the day.” She later added that she’s not entirely sure she can trust the media she’s consuming.

One Hispanic/Latino male (HLME10) said that he likes to watch BBC news on his television. “I prefer BBC news, because it gives you a bigger picture of the world,” he said. “We need to pay attention to what’s going on in the community. I don’t get news on the Internet, really.” A few Hispanic/Latino participants described their new media experiences as communal, often between spouses, and at times, selecting news content that was faith-based and/or ethnic.

RQ7 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites remember about this particular news event in the Sanford, Florida area, including the media coverage of the “Stand Your Ground” law. In-depth interviews included several questions (Questionnaire numbers 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37) designed to probe the narratives in which participants recall and share (when asked) about the heightened news event, years after the shooting. In all 30 cases, participants were open and interested in sharing their stories about the event. Notably, Black participants, both female and male, shared very different narratives about this study’s intensely-covered news event: the Trayvon Martin
shooting. Such answers to questions helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in the study, narratives about how varying groups describe each other, and especially, how group members describe their racial and ethnic group and others through narratives of the Trayvon Martin shooting, including those related to the Stand Your Ground law (potentially understood through their described narratives of events connected to Martin’s death).

For the purpose of this theory-driven study, after the data was compiled it was then disassembled by organizing the narratives of participants into categories of gender/race/ethnicity, which were reassembled after months of iterative analysis. Subsequently, the following seven emerging themes were identified to help evaluate RQ7: division and tension, prejudices and stereotypes, victimization, distrust of media, Black-White binary paradigm, distrust of legal system, and Black Lives Matter.

For Black females, the researcher found that narratives about victimization were recurrent in the majority of their stories. Black females also described in their narratives division and tension, prejudices and stereotypes and distrust of media emerging themes equally. Altogether, there was one only narrative coded as an emerging theme of a Black-White binary paradigm. Also, Black females’ stories were not identified as having narratives about their distrust of the legal system or Black Lives Matter.

In contrast, Black males described most of their stories suggesting a distrust of media. There were a few narratives that demonstrated feelings of division and tension, prejudices and stereotypes, and victimization. Two Black male participants described a distrust of legal system in their narratives.

Next, White females described feelings of division and tension and victimization fairly equally in their narratives. A few of these participants brought up Black Lives Matter and there
was one mention coded under the Black-White binary paradigm and a distrust of the legal system by a White female participant. Finally, White Males mainly described division and tension in their narratives. A few White males expressed feelings about Black Lives Matter and even shared narratives with each of the following emerging themes: victimization, distrust of media, and Black-White binary paradigm. Many Blacks shared what they believed was insider knowledge about the shooting and the events leading up to and after the news event. They described the Black community and what they saw in the news, including news events after the shooting that were primarily racial and violent in nature.

Also, the researcher examined stories from both male and female Hispanic/Latino participants, which described their narratives of the news event addressed in RQ7 broadly, and fairly equally, in terms of a distrust of media and a distrust of the legal system. However, Hispanic/Latino women contrasted from Hispanic/Latino males in their stories about the news event in terms of victimization, Black-White binary paradigm, including one reference each to division and tension and prejudices and stereotypes. The latter instances of emerging themes, were described in the Hispanic/Latino male narratives. However, Hispanic/Latino males only shared stories about victimization and the Black-White binary paradigm once in their answers.

The Stand Your Ground law was regularly mentioned, but not necessarily in the context of understanding the law and how it related to the Trayvon Martin news event. The Stand Your Ground law was frequently described as unjust and not in favor of Black people, by Black male and female participants. White and Hispanic/Latino participants described the law at times as fair and at times as what was used to acquit George Zimmerman at the end of the trial.

Hispanic/Latino participants were not as familiar with the law as the Black and White participants. Blacks described it regularly as a law created to hurt members of their
community, while Whites described it as a law meant to protect people. Hispanic/Latinos described it at times, only in association with the news media coverage of the shooting.

Overall, there was a lot of confusion expressed by all groups about The Stand Your Ground law, and many participants described not hearing about it until the Trayvon Martin shooting and not hearing about it in more recent years.

Table 4-26 depicts how often (frequency) participants from each groups described narratives about the aforementioned emerging themes found in the stories about Trayvon Martin’s shooting, years later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ7 Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Black Female Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Male Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>White Female Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Male Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino Female Frequency of Narrative</th>
<th>Male Frequency of Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emerging themes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Division and Tension</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudices and Stereotypes</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimization</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust of Media</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-White Binary Paradigm</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust of Legal System</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Lives Matter</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, the following stream of narrative provided by Black female participant BLFR1 describes stories via emerging themes, starting with division, then leading into stereotypes and prejudices, followed by victimization, and ending in media distrust. The researcher identifies the following narratives to be critical in understanding how some Black female and male participants remember the Trayvon Martin news event. That narrative is below.

The researcher asked, “What do you remember about the Trayvon Martin shooting?”

BLFR1 participant began her story describing division:

Let me tell you something. See a lot of this didn't come out. I know for a fact it didn’t because newspapers don't want to write nothing they don't know about, that they don't know for sure. When I called my XXX ... My XXX was a XXX for Trayvon. When I called XXX, (XXX was down in XXX), I said ... I told XXX. I said, “That's a Section 8 neighborhood. That ...” And she said, “Oh. No. XXX, that's a gated community.” I said, “That’s Section 8.” You have a lot of Hispanics in it. In fact, I think Hispanics ... You got more Hispanics and whites on Section 8 than you do Blacks on Section 8. I really do. We're only in Seminole County, we're only like 12% of the population. In Sanford, we're like 30% of the population. In Florida, we're like 10% of the population. He (George Zimmerman) didn't know. He didn't recognize Trayvon. I think he was trying to figure out, “Who are you? Where you come from? What you doing here? You ain't supposed to be over here!”

Next, that same participant describes stereotypes and prejudices in the following narrative stream:

Yeah. Before he got killed. His dad say he picked him up from the bus station, I believe. He got killed on a Sunday. His dad picked him up Friday night from the bus station. He said, “I'm sending him back on Monday morning in a body bag.” That's what the dad said. See Zimmerman just saw him and knew he was a new face. He knew he was a new kid. He knew he had never seen him before…

The same participant describes victimization in the following narrative stream

“It wasn't that he had been harassing Trayvon. He had been harassing other young men over there, but not Trayvon.”
“This is what a lot of people over there told us. Now, you know they wouldn't talk to the police, told you. They wouldn't talk to reporters. They wouldn't talk to police. They wouldn't talk to ...”

“The Section 8 people over there, the Black people over there that was on Section 8. You know why they wouldn't talk, don't you?”

“They [the Section 8 people] would get put out. They would be set up...Section 8 got rules and regulations. Number one rule is drugs are caught in your apartment you gone. They could set you up. Nobody over there... (would talk).”

Later, the following participant described media distrust in this narrative stream:

I know. See, like the Section 8’s, they could lose...You gotta have a place to stay. You gotta have a place to live. You get put off Section 8, you don't have a job, what you going to do? You got four kids. What you going to do? You couldn't get nobody ... The newspapers couldn't ... The newspapers used to ask me, “XXX, you think you can get them up here and we can talk to them. My paper’s willing to pay this.”

I said, “They’re not going to talk.”

Black male participant BLMR4 described in the following narrative what he remembered about the Trayvon Martin shooting in his stories identified as division and tension, victimization, and a distrust of the legal system. The researcher found the following sequence of narratives coded for RQ7 to be important to gain some perspective through the experiences of the local Black community. Here’s an example of that stream of narrative:

The researcher asked: What do you remember about the Trayvon Martin shooting? BLMR4 described division and tension in the following narratives:

“People watched the whole thing unfold in the confrontation. Not at the complex where it occurred, but right here in the park. There was no active White participation at all. I think a lot of White people saw it as an issue of law enforcement vs. keeping crime down.”
Because the whole incident started with the break-ins at this apartment complex. Apparently, there must have been a hole in the fence or something where black guys came into this apartment complex and they would break into these apartments.

This guy having this position there as the security, well not security guard, but the neighborhood watch guy, was aware that blacks came into the complex and were breaking in. I don't know if there was any prosecution for these incidents or the persons who were doing the break-ins. But apparently, he felt they were getting away with it. And that's what created the incident.

I guess the White community probably looked at it, because this was a predominant white community in that apartment area, you probably should tighten up. Or law enforcement had a right to... to check up on these guys coming into there and breaking into that apartment complex.

Next, that same participant describes victimization here:

So, that was the basis of it. The beginning. So, I can understand their thoughts. They probably looked at it like a crime issue and we looked at it for what it really was. That a kid lost his life ...

Next, this participant describes distrust of legal system in the following narrative stream:

“I was part of it [the injustice]. The choosing of the jury. That was the most dominant thing.”

“There were no Blacks, per say, on that jury. They had one mixed girl, woman rather. And I don't know what kind of mix it was. It resorted in a darker hue of the skin but ...”

You see, and they knew that too. And choosing a jury. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm sure that it was done legally. But, nevertheless, the end result was that they had set up the scenario where this guy could walk. And that's what he did. He walked.

And so, the girl comes on ABC, this dark skinned lady. I don't know what her racial makeup was. She says, the very next day on ABC, I should've voted to convict because I knew he was guilty. But I felt pressure to vote him innocent. Right. Why didn't you do your job? Because, as she hung the jury, that would have gave the lady, the prosecutor Angela Cory, another shot at this guy again and she would've been able to correct her mistakes.

Male participant BLMR8 said that the Trayvon Martin shooting was big.
People said that they brought in buses of protestors for news, but that’s not true. People were already protesting and more people joined. The memorial for Trayvon is here. People were everywhere around that the night of the verdict. In the streets. Waiting. Police everywhere. Thinking something was going down.

He added, “Media was here for, I dunno, a while. Like, seriously years. I think they’re still here. I mean. People want to kill Zimmerman. They may succeed.”

That same participant described Trayvon Martin as someone who wasn’t from the area. “No one knew him here,” he added. Another Black male participant (BLMR10) described remembering the event via the prejudicial portrayal of Trayvon Martin by news media here. Some tried to portray him as a thug you know,” he said. Then that same participant described how stereotypes in the news related to Trayvon Martin’s shooting which involved stereotyped Blacks and the Black community.

White participants, both female and male, shared very different narratives from one another about this study’s intensely covered news event: the Trayvon Martin shooting. Many White females remembered what they believed to be unfair and unjust about the shooting and some described events that were racial and violent, which occurred after the event. However, some White females discussed news events after the shooting that were unrelated in nature to the shooting. White males did not fully address the news event in the same manner, but did mention the event in the news. Black Lives Matter was regular mentioned among Whites, who frequently felt that as a movement they did not consider all lives mattering. The Stand Your Ground law was mentioned, but again, not necessarily in the context of understanding the law and how it related to the Trayvon Martin news event. Also, many whites thought George Zimmerman was a police office or person of appointed authority and that he was a White male.

In keeping with this study’s focus to highlight the narratives in which the data was examined, White female participant WHFR2 described what she remembered in the news
through statements coded as division. The researcher asked, “What do you remember about the
Trayvon Martin shooting?” She shared that the event was “pretty bad” in her community.
“There was a lot of protest, and people were angry,” she said. “I just remember, there was a lot
of things going on for a while, especially during the trial. I knew some people who actually sat
in on that.”

In a follow up statement, the same participant shared that people on her social media
platforms were angry. She described that some of her student colleagues were mad and
confused and that she felt like there was nothing she could do about what had had happened,
due to her student status and workload. Another White female participant (WHFR5) said that
Blacks and Hispanic/Latinos were not getting along. She described George Zimmerman’s
racial description in the news media as “messy” and explained that it angered people. The
following narrative was coded as a Black-White binary system:

I know he was... what was he, Hispanic, but people thought he was white, and
that caused a lot of problems. At the end of the day, Black people just seem mad
here. They seem angry. It's probably not getting better. I wouldn't say it's getting
worse, but it's not getting better.

Other White female participants described what they remembered from the Trayvon
Martin shooting in terms of his age, the verbal altercation between Zimmerman and Martin,
and how Zimmerman was “eventually acquitted” after the trial. They depicted what seemed a
timeline with very little emotion attached. White female participants also described that the
event was significant due to the amount of tension it created in their community. Emerging
themes of division and tension were described in White female narratives via words such as
upheaval, chaotic, and spurring protest for years.
White male participant WHMR4 described remembering the Trayvon Martin shooting event through a Black Lives Matter protest and parade. He said that the events were meant to create a problem in the community. Here is that narrative:

They had a parade down here and 12 black people that they had to bring in to protest. The whole thing was such a joke. It was crazy. It was ridiculous. This happened in Lake Mary. It was in Sanford. It's one of the townhouses in Lake Mary Port. Trayvon Martin was a hood. We're not supposed to talk about that, because it's... We're being racist when we say that. He was a punk. He jumped this poor ... George Zimmerman was one of the cops ... Okay, fine. Speaking about the racism and crap. They could find a racist situation. They should do that and capitalize on it to make a racist point. They haven't picked good choices. Probably use what they got.

Later in the interview, that same participant described Trayvon Martin as “a big guy with a chip on his shoulder.” He remembers the media not portraying the photos of Zimmerman and Martin correctly.

Not in the pictures they showed, because that'd be racist. We have to keep up the politically correct image of the situation. We have to create the division. All this stuff is about creating division. Pure image, to divide and conquer.

Another White male participant (WHME10) said he remembers that he saw a shift in the Black and White community after Trayvon Martin’s shooting. He described remembering that the news media painted George Zimmerman as a White male instead of as a Hispanic. As he explained:

I felt that was more being portrayed to the media and I felt it was actually setting up a division there in a sense... Yes, yes. The year the media were having... the guy was not a White guy, he was a Hispanic guy. So why are they using this white connotation to bring this kind of division in between each other? To be honest with you, I never felt there was Hispanic division there.

Lastly, Hispanic/Latino stories were generally shorter and less descriptive in nature. The following stream of narratives provided by Hispanic/Latino female participant HLFR1 describes her stories about the event through emerging themes starting with a distrust of media followed by a distrust of the legal system. Here is that narrative:
The researcher asked, “What do you remember about the Trayvon Martin shooting?”

The participant responded:

Well, the media coverage seemed to be confusing and at times hypocritical. They didn’t seem to really answer questions about what had happened. At this time I’m having trouble even remembering about the media coverage. Maybe that is because there was so much bad stuff going on at that time and we weren’t getting the facts, it seems.

That same participant described a distrust of government: “Well, when they went to court and trial. And all that stuff. The evidence was so shoddy. There was no real evidence, you know. Didn’t really seem fair.”

Another Hispanic/Latino participant (HLFR2) described her distrust in government as well and said, “What keeps coming to mind is the word democracy. When you hear the word democracy, you think people will be treated fairly, but that’s not always the case.” The researcher found that Hispanic/Latino females frequently addressed in their stories a Black-White binary paradigm, describing how their ethnic group was made up of many kinds of people and that no one really could explain where George Zimmerman was from. For example, Hispanic/Latino participant HLFR5 said, “I’d say the community was mixed in how they saw George Zimmerman. Ok. Was he mixed Hispanic/Black? Or was he mixed Hispanic/White? He wasn’t Black, and he wasn’t White, now was he?”

Hispanic/Latino males described a similar distrust in media and the legal system. One male participant, HLMR3, said, “Florida is a funny state.” He added, “Nice people, but it doesn’t seem like the Civil Rights movement is working out for us in the system.” He added that, “…the biggest problem facing group is crime and drugs (and) that causes the courts and the local government to not treat everyone fairly (in his opinion).” Another Hispanic/Latino participant, HLME10, said he remembers after Martin’s death, other news stories about
shootings were covered. However, he doesn’t recall stories about Blacks and Hispanics, like that of the Trayvon Martin shooting.

Participants’ memory and understanding of the Stand Your Ground law was probed to answer RQ7, as well. Here are some of the narratives extracted from stories by each participant, which help to illustrate how various group members shared their comprehension of the law frequently used in news media during its coverage of the shooting, but which was not used to acquit George Zimmerman.

Black females shared the following:

“I think Stand Your Ground has a wide range of excuses to pull the trigger. A wide range of excuses to pull that trigger. That’s what I think.”

“They were trying to pass another part to Stand Your Ground law this past, not election cycle, but this round in the house and state.”

“So, I think it's one of those laws that it was so complicated on the ballot. It had so much in it. Nobody knew what it was.”

“The people who wrote it and they knew who they wrote it for.”

“They didn't write it for us. They didn't right it to protect us. I'm still not sure what they needed protecting from.”

“George Zimmerman claimed it was in self-defense, that he killed him in self-defense, ergo it was stand your ground.”

Since then, there was a White guy who killed… There were four Black kids in Jacksonville in 7/11, and they were in a car. They were loud, and they had the music going, and the white guy was telling them to turn it down or something. I’m sure they said fuck you, and he ended up shooting one and killing one of them. He claimed Stand Your Ground, that the kid was a threat to him. Well, the kid was in a car. He lost, and he went to prison.”

What bothers me about Stand Your Ground is things like that, and things like, because in their minds, any Black male is a threat to them, even if they’re inside
a car and nowhere near them. That’s not enough. You know what, Black males are not a threat to you. I can be much more of a threat to you than they can. Just the fact that they are Black males, they’re a threat.

Black males shared the following:

“There’s so much out there I can’t just list a few things. George Zimmerman popularized Stand your Ground. I mean he picked the fight.”

I believe in it ... To be honest with you, I’m a gun carrier. I think Stand Your Ground when used in the correct way and it's supposed to be used the way it was meant to be. I think that in regards to the Trayvon Martin, Stand Your Ground is only one person was able to tell their story, you know and that was Zimmerman, and he was more so focused on how to use Stand Your Ground, more so.

White females shared the following:

I don't know a lot about Stand Your Ground, but it seems to be... Zimmerman used Stand Your Ground, and he used Stand Your Ground, and he won. He could get by with what happened because of Stand Your Ground. I don't really hear about Stand Your Ground outside of that. I guess people are using it, but that's all I know.

Well, I actually wasn't very familiar with Stand Your Ground until the whole Trayvon Martin problem surfaced. Then I looked it up. From what I know of Stand Your Ground it was nothing like what happened with George Zimmerman. From what I understand, Stand Your Ground, you have to be inside your house and so does your assailant. They have to have a weapon and be attacking you in order for that to hold. Which is not how I understood it to happen with George Zimmerman. I was very confused about how all of that played out because that is not how I understood that law.

“That's about all I know about Stand Your Ground. I just remember that he was acquitted.”

White males shared the following:

“Stand Your Ground. Stand Your Ground. What’s that? Which one is that?”

“That was the Trayvon Martin thing. We have laws in Florida to where if you stand your ground and someone attacks us, we can defend ourselves.”

“What’s wrong with that?”
Well, when that first came out with Zimmerman, that he was not guilty because Stand Your Law grounds, I felt there was still a loss there. Apparently that law still is in effect here today in Florida for him, if I'm not a liar. I think that still is in effect, the Stand Your Ground law. I got to go back to the fact that, here's a young man, for whatever reason, he was killed. Right or wrong or indifferent, a death is still a death. That is a huge tragedy.

Do I believe in the law, Stand Your Ground? Personally, myself, I don't have to stand my ground. I let the Almighty stand my ground for me. So, when somebody threatens me or like that guy that came up and…

Hispanic/Latino females shared the following:

“After Trayvon’s death, standing your ground was something that can be used to shoot Blacks, Hispanics, or whoever.”

“I’m thinking, but nothing’s happening. That question is very hard for me.”

“God’s kingdom is about an honest government with fair laws.”

Hispanic/Latino males shared the following:

“It only works when a White person shoots a Black person when you standing your ground.”

“I remember hearing a lot about it in the news we were watching.”

“I’m not offended by it. It doesn’t seem to be important here.”

“I think we discussed it in our church’s bible study, but I can’t remember exactly what was said since then.”

RQ8 asked, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites remember about other news events outside of the Sanford, Florida area? In-depth interviews included several questions meant to probe how group members recalled events following heightened media coverage that was both violent and racial (Questionnaire numbers 24, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37). Such answers to questions helped the researcher to examine, as explained later in the study, narratives about how group members described their racial and
ethnic group and others through their narratives about other news events after the Trayvon Martin shooting (potentially understood through their described narratives of news events connected to or like Martin’s death).

Overall, participants described many diverse news events that took place outside of the Sanford, FL area after the Trayvon Martin shooting. Black and White females described multiple news events that were racial and violent, covered by national news media. However, Black females only described such news events related to race and violence, while White and Hispanic/Latino females described news events related to climate change, animal rights, and international conflict.

Black males did not seem to recall many news events outside of Sanford, and they mainly described in their narratives news events pertaining to President Obama and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign. White males did describe a few news events that were racial and violent, but mainly they described events related to President Obama, the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign, and news coverage events that happened before the Trayvon Martin shooting. Hispanic/Latino participants described stories after the shooting related to the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign and Baltimore and Ferguson’s national news coverage events.

Hispanic/Latino females mentioned climate change, the SeaWorld Controversy, and international conflicts in their narratives. The Hispanic/Latino female participants also described one instance of mentioning Black Lives Matter. Hispanic/Latino males conversely did not mention Black Lives Matter. However, Hispanic/Latino males did recall events related to President Obama, international conflicts, and climate change issues in the news.

The following list describes news events mentioned by participants and their narratives about news events outside of the Sanford area, after Martin’s death: Black Lives Matter, Flint,
MI water crisis, President Obama, Charleston, SC Emanuel AME Church, the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign, Baltimore, MD Freddie Gray, McKinney, TX Dajerria Becton, NY, NY Eric Garner, Ferguson, MO Michael Brown, Jacksonville, FL Jordan Davis, Columbia MO University of MO race protests, 2016 Syrian conflict, Chicago, IL police brutality, Orlando, FL 2016 SeaWorld controversy, Climate Change, International Conflict, and pre-Trayvon shooting coverage.

Table 4-27 depicts how often (frequency) participants from each group described narratives about news events described outside of the Sanford area after Martin’s death. As described, Black females shared more news events after the Trayvon Martin shooting than any other group of participants. All of their narratives about related news coverage were mostly about other racially violent news media coverage. There were a few mentions of news events about President Obama and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign.

For starters, Black female participant BLFR1 was asked by the researcher, “What other events do you remember after the Trayvon Martin shooting?” She described remembering events that related to injustice and inequality. “Police brutality. Politics. The way some of the United States citizens feel about the President of the United States and I think that's simply because the color of his skin,” she said. “Some of the things that he's had to endure, no other president has had to endure and that really makes me mad.”

Additionally, she remembers other events like Black Lives Matter, Flint, Michigan, and the Emanuel Church massacre. Another Black female participant, BLFR5, recalls one CNN interview with Don Lemmon, which highlighted the mother of Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, and Michael Brown. She said, “I think everyone had to cry. That stuck with me.”
## Table 4-27. Described News Events Outside of Sanford, Florida area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female Frequency of Narrative</td>
<td>Male Frequency of Narrative</td>
<td>Female Frequency of Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Black Lives Matter
- Black: X
- White: XX
- Hispanic/Latino: X

### Flint, MI Water Crisis
- Black: XX
- White: X

### President Obama
- Black: XX
- White: XX
- Hispanic/Latino: XXX
- Female: X
- Male: X

### Charleston, SC Emanuel AME Church
- Black: XX

### 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign
- Black: XX
- White: X
- Hispanic/Latino: XXX
- Female: XX
- Male: XX

### Baltimore, MD Freddie Gray
- Black: X
- White: X
- Hispanic/Latino: X
- Female: X
- Male: X

### McKinney, TX Dajerria Becton
- Black: X

### NY, NY Eric Garner
- Black: X

### Ferguson, MO Michael Brown
- Black: X
- White: XX
- Hispanic/Latino: X
- Female: X
- Male: X

### Jacksonville, FL Jordan Davis
- Black: XX
- White: X
Table 4-27. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Emerging themes</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Frequency of Narrative</td>
<td>Male Frequency of Narrative</td>
<td>Female Frequency of Narrative</td>
<td>Male Frequency of Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando, FL 2016 SeaWorld Controversy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Conflict</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Trayvon Shooting News Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Black males, as stated earlier, did not describe news events outside of the Sanford area to any extent. News events related to President Obama and the news events of the 2016 Presidential Campaign were the only news events Black males shared in their narratives about covered events. Although the researcher did find that Black males were less verbal when asked about other news events since Martin’s shooting, one Black male participant, BLMR3, said that he remembers a lot of discussion about the unemployment rates after Trayvon Martin’s shooting. “No matter what Mr. Obama does, and he hasn't done a heck of a lot for black people,” he said, “I think his health plan was good and it affected a lot of people, and you cannot that away. But in terms of anything else, it’s just disturbing to me that he doesn't see anything wrong with continually having his labor department understate these numbers.” Other
Black male participants described money issues and the economy as it relates to President Obama and their understanding of the unemployment rate affecting Blacks locally and nationally.

White female participants described news events outside of the Sanford area that were diverse in content and geography. While many of the news events emerging from White female narratives were racial and violent, other news events related to world events and national interests about climate change and animal rights. One example, extracted from White female participant WHFR2 described via multiple narratives the Blackfish documentary and the SeaWorld controversy. As one participant said:

Something that really made me mad. SeaWorld. SeaWorld really made me mad. Come on, seriously, it's horrible. We don't even go to SeaWorld anymore. I did grow up going to SeaWorld, being here, but I don't go anymore. It's just terrible.

Later, that same participant commented on how recent media coverage about climate change is helping people in Florida grow more aware about environmental issues. However, White female participant WHFR5 did describe remembering the shooting of Michael Brown and subsequent protest in Ferguson, MO. “I also know that the Black Lives Matter movement became very front and center in the news, which also sparked more discourse and came out to All Lives Matters and Blue Lives Matters. There's been a lot of people.”

White male participants described events about President Obama and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign, and one narrative related to Ferguson, MO and Black Lives Matter. A few of the narratives by White males described news events that did not occur after Trayvon Martin’s shooting. Those events were described as the OJ Simpson trial and President Bill Clinton’s impeachment coverage. The researcher found that all groups, except for Black males, mentioned at least once news events about Black Lives Matter. White males did not necessarily recall events that were racial and violent, like the other participant groups. White male
participant WHMR3 said he had been paying attention to the “Iraqi-Iran strife” and the “fighting in Afghanistan,” featured in the news over the past few months, and he often tuned in to the 2016 Presidential Campaign news. While the question asked by the researcher probed to understand news events since Martin’s shooting, two White males described remembering the OJ Simpson trial and the impeachment of President Clinton.

Not unlike White females, the Hispanic/Latino female participants described one instance of mentioning Black Lives Matter and events that were both racial and violent in nature and events about climate change, animal rights, and the 2016 Presidential Campaign. Conversely, Hispanic/Latino males did not mention Black Lives Matter. However, Hispanic/Latino males did recall events related to President Obama, international conflicts, and climate change issues in the news. Both male and female Hispanic/Latino participants described tuning into events, lately, related to the Presidential Campaign, especially coverage about immigration positions among candidates. “Immigration, it’s been an issue for some time now,” said HLFR1 participant. “My family is working class. What are they going to do, put a wall up and send everyone back who isn’t?” Several of these group members shared that family members were awaiting their citizenship status, which prompted special attention paid to the elections and to President Obama. Hispanic/Latino male HLMR9 said, “I followed the Michael Brown story, because I wanted to see how biased the media could be. What was the whole story? Blacks and police, and Whites, you know we don’t always know every single angle.”
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

*It is critical in the sense that it stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about...* [It] does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question... *It is directed towards the very framework for action... to the social and political complex as a whole rather than to the separate parts (Cox, 1980: 130).*

On that day four years prior to this research, Feb. 26, 2012, when Trayvon Martin was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, the community of Sanford was changed forever. It emerged as Ground Zero for the Black Lives Movement, a social change movement that campaigns against violence toward Blacks. One that continues to gain momentum and attention in the United States, especially in connection to heightened media events, where race, violence, and injustice are front and center. Martin’s death made national news and stayed in the news as an intensely-covered event for years. It marked the beginning in many people’s minds of “the” highly publicized racially violent tragedy, followed by many others over the next four years. This demonstrated to some that not just Sanford, but Florida and the nation were still entrenched in beliefs and attitudes rooted in an oppressive history of marginalized population groups. Millions traverse the county to visit the memorial to Trayvon Martin, preserved by the Black community in Seminole County. The people of the Sanford area are active in Black Lives Matter protests across the United States wherever racial violence has erupted and caught the attention of the national news media. Critical Race postulates that race relations in terms of daily interactions in America are connected to historic racial underpinnings and American society’s neglect of the innate right to racial equality of all people from the founding of this country. Critical Race suggests that historically America’s dominant White leaders and institutions subjected minorities to demeaning stereotypes and racist patterns of oppression (Sloan et al., 1993). This study’s findings confirm such postulations.
And while critical race issues are spawned from the civil rights discourses that emerged within a Black-White paradigm, it expanded to include immigrant groups, such as Hispanics, and others marginalized by people of power and issues that intersect with class (Solorzano & Delgado, 2001; Velez, Perez, Benavides, de la Luz, & Solorzano, 2008). This study found that the Hispanic and Latino participants described the Trayvon Martin shooting and related coverage as an event outside of their ethnic communities, one that affected Blacks and Whites, and increased tensions locally between those groups, and one that they generally described being disconnected from. This was contrasted with Black and White narratives. The study also supported the critical race theory perspective that Whites will deny having benefited from White privilege, and people of color, whether Black or Hispanic, have unequal access to such privilege and power. These differences, including access to safe housing, education, employment, and medical resources (Jones, 2002), were found to be supported by the research, but not always or across all groups. The theory-driven examination of political alienation among diverse racial and ethnic groups, who have lived though and experienced an intensely covered news event, and the emerging stories and expressions of the people involved years later, demonstrates that the people living and working in the Sanford area feel very strongly about news media, race, power, their political system, and one another.

Indeed, this study was designed to be, and was executed, in the systematic examination of small-scale research. The research process and results did not end up reflecting simple, small linkages to answer the posed research questions. Instead, it signified that in communication and political science research, this study only scratched the surface of how we connect and make sense of intense news coverage, to narratives from and about the politically alienated and their described oppressors.
The researcher’s goal in this project has been and continues to be to examine varying racial and ethnic groups on a micro level, to understand the experiences and feelings of community members in the Sanford, Florida area – where heavy media attention was focused on the Trayvon Martin shooting and the origin of the social movement, Black Lives Matter. For three months, the researcher entered into the community to conduct fieldwork with the objective to observe and interview purposefully selected group members, with in-depth discussions with the local residents. Those people who lived in the area before and after the shooting and the intense media coverage were chosen to participate in the research.

During her fieldwork, the researcher often returned to interview participants multiple times, to ensure all required data was collected, and to develop connections of trust with some of the 30 community members she interviewed. She practiced “a systematic monitoring of self: throughout data collection to manage her own subjectivity through personal self-reflective pre- and post-recorded narratives each week. These self-reflexive narratives grew into a part of the process as the interviews were transcribed, archived, disassembled and reassembled for thematic analysis. The researcher explored the Sanford area during interviews and after, in the city’s downtown, the Twin Lakes community, where the shooting occurred, including local government buildings, parks, libraries, restaurants, neighborhoods, businesses, and educational institutions. This intense human connection to where the people acted out their lives informed the research further.

Described again in this study’s limitations, the research process from the start of IRB approval, leading up to data collection was extensive, depleting, exhaustive, depressing, and complex. The researcher experienced cooperation and support with some research participants and at times her own negotiations as an outsider. Majority group representatives were evoked
after experiences with participants’ distrust, avoidance, discomfort, prejudices, discrimination, and, in a few instances, hostility. Early in the data collection, the interviews exhibited linkages to critical race theory. Later while disassembling and reassembling iterative work with the narratives for analysis, prior critical race literature reaffirmed the researcher’s focus on intense media coverage and local groups’ feelings of political alienation. Consequently, what emerged in the findings was not, per se, some generalized “truth” that answers each research question with concision and confidence, but instead a thorough and authentic representation of the narratives supporting this study’s theory gathered over hundreds of hours in the field. As Knight (2002) asserts, small-scale researchers who study people up close and personally may get “messy” findings, “because people, as complex beings, produce messy information that may be very resistant to generalized interpretation” (p. 157).

**Major Findings**

The following sections address what the researcher examined in the results by summarizing major and minor findings confirmed through the study’s eight posed research questions. The researcher connects the findings to critical race theory, and through the extant literature on media studies and political alienation, discussed how the study’s findings support or contradict related research. Limitations were described extensively, prior to the researcher’s discussion about future research and how further research could address such limitations. Finally, in the study’s conclusion, the chapter ends identifying the significance of this small-scale study’s findings and its implications for research methods, practice, and the fields of communication, journalism, and political behavior. And so, the researcher sought to understand, years after Trayvon Martin’s death, the political alienation shifting across disparate racial/ethnic group residents of the Sanford, Florida area.
Political Alienation

A major finding from this study was that groups historically marginalized in the United States – groups perceived to be disregarded in this country – describe feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and despair from their political system, since the Trayvon Martin shooting. As supported by Delgado and Sopino (2012) in critical race literature, minority group members who are Black, male and female, White females, and at times some Hispanic/Latino females, describe in their narratives feelings connected to this study’s definition of political alienation, that also link to historic oppression. Such narratives were described by the aforementioned groups as “getting worse” years after the event.

As it relates to groups and group members, a person’s sense of belonging to a social group is developed by individuals who feel they do belong and who develop their own self-concept as a result. Alongside civic engagement, Putman in 2000 suggested that when Americans decrease in their civic engagement their political participation is affected.

This study’s critical race theory identifies that an unequal division in groups of people feeling a weakened sense of attachment to political institutions, such as access to elected officials and voting, some voices will be alienated and their needs will not be addressed (Oskarson, 2007; Weakliem & Borch, 2006). Results are feelings of political powerlessness, isolation, and despair. The idea of things getting worse in the community for some residents was often connected to the narratives of the Trayvon Martin event without prompts by the researcher. A telling example of this is found in the emerging themes linked to political alienation, and the frequency with which the researcher observed the themes in Blacks, White females, and some Hispanic/Latino participants. Later in the discussion, the researcher will address a minor finding highlighting how the selected groups described alliances less often, and in their infrequent experiences, yet described oppositions extensively and frequently.
News Media’s Narratives and Political Alienation

Another major finding was the salience of race and violence found in the narratives describing the examined news event in great detail (from memory) and how news media coverage of the Trayvon Martin shooting was connected to some participants’ descriptions of feeling politically alienated. Earlier, the researcher cited the findings of Domke et al. (1999) that people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are influenced by media coverage of political issues by way of perceptions of racial/ethnic stereotypes and issue formation and positions related to economic, political, and legal issues. That news coverage, focused on racial and ethnic stereotypes about social and political issues, is more influential when political elites are a part of the discourse (Domke et al., 1999). And such influences affect race relations and political cognitions and judgments (Domke et al., 1999).

While this study does not seek to generalize its small-scale findings, it did observe narratives about media’s coverage of Martin’s death frequently and in-depth via division and tension, prejudices and stereotypes, victimization, distrust of media, Black-White binary paradigm, distrust of the legal system, and Black Lives Matter emerging themes. Such themes also link to support study’s critical race research lens, where common methodological approaches tend to employ storytelling and narratives by way of narrative inquiry and in-depth interviews to examine disparate social classes and to recognize abuses of power structures (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

Intense Media Coverage and Storytelling

Another major finding was that narratives constructing one’s racial and/or ethnic identity are affected by the linkages that minorities make in news content. These narratives were constructed after experiencing an intensely covered event, where their racial/ethnic group member was victimized by a perceived power structure that reaffirms and compounds feelings
of political powerlessness, isolation, and despair. Knowledge of social problems is often not
the result of visible forces, but such social issues are likely understood over time by news
consumers, through the media’s construction of them (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Kensicki, 2004;
Tuchman, Andsager, Antunovic, Bissell, Brown, Butler, & Vilela, 2013). Political
communication researchers argue that “the media not only can be successful in telling us what
to think about, they also can be successful in telling us how to think about it” (McCombs,
2005, p. 546). Since this study found that most participants across all groups describe using
multiple devices (like their cell phone, computer, television, and radio) to consume news, many
citing frequent news consumption throughout the day on various devices, the following
observation was understood.

The researcher observed that participants’ extensive and frequent narratives about the
intense news coverage of Martin’s shooting might be connected to their descriptions of using
multiple media devices to consume news content regularly. However, participants also reported
an overall negative experience with news media (that it is biased, racist, unfair, damaging,
destructive, consuming, and invasive). Some scholars assert that journalists are like storytellers
– exploitive storytellers, if you will – exploiting narrative tensions and rendering social order
(Pauly, 2004; Pauly, 2009). Critical race theory was further supported in the finding that
minority group members (Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, White females) recall events that are
racial and violent more frequently than majority groups (e.g., White males, who tend to recall
George Zimmerman as the victim and news events about politics and international affairs).

Finifter (1970) once suggested that political powerlessness was found among those with
the least amount of education. Thompson and Horton (1960) had earlier suggested that when
one’s position in a social structure is stripped of affluence and influence, political alienation
can be found. In 1966, Wright argued that socio demographic variables were weakly correlated with political alienation, but in 1989, Herring suggested that political inefficacy was higher among minorities with low levels of education and thus low incomes.

Therefore, this finding suggests that linked news coverage to historic racial identity emerges in stories about other related news events. Thus feelings, of powerlessness, isolation, and despair are engendered for minorities in the United States.

**Gender, Race, and Stories**

Another major finding is that White females and Black females, and some Hispanic/Latinos females who identified as mothers share in their expressed concern during interviews with the mothers of Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Freddie Gray, and Eric Garner. These deaths, which were described as racial, violent, and unjust, were all learned about via intense news coverages. Females generally and specifically described the news media coverage of the mothers of Black, and at times young males, including the Flint water crisis, where the affected Black mothers and their children were covered, and the college-aged university of Missouri Black protestors covered after racial assaults on campus.

Weakliem and Borch (2006) found that females were more likely to feel politically alienated, faster than other population groups. Additionally, females tend to affiliate with a political organization less than men (Burns et al. 2001). Education and some level of informed understanding have been connected to political knowledge and political participation, while political systems in this country have favored males over females historically (Burns et al. 2001). Also, females are more engaged in participatory activity, where other females are in leadership. Hilligus demonstrated that educated people tend to describe beliefs in democratic ideals and participate politically, even though Karp and Banducci (2008) shared that women are generally less interested in politics and less likely to describe democratic ideals. Thus,
while women tend to feel politically alienated faster, they are also more likely to increase in their feelings of voice, empowerment, and connectivity, as education increases.

And so, the researcher found a common link between female mothers and intensely covered news events that were racial and unjust in this small-scale research. Females described empathic feelings for the mothers and their fallen sons, through narratives about powerlessness, despair, and isolation. They described feeling worried and upset about how other racially profiled young Black males were being treated. This examined maternal connection females share over loss and parenting was found in all groups of females, not just the Trayvon Martin story. It was also uncovered in their stories that linked other media coverage of racial injustice.

**Stand Your Ground Storytelling**

Finally, two other major findings emerged from the participants’ overall misunderstanding and confusion over the Stand Your Ground law and its association with the Trayvon Martin shooting. Popular and scholarly debates over the Stand Your Ground (SYG) law also intensified, linking race, criminality, socio-economics, and the law’s social meaning, related impact, and politics (Coker, 2014). In connection, the researcher found that while the law was described frequently in the narratives about Trayvon Martin, only once was it described as a law that did not acquit George Zimmerman, nor was it used to any extent during the trial. White males and some white females described the Stand Your Ground law as one that protects people when being attacked.

Many of the White males described it as fair and protective. Narratives about the law described it in terms of White people against Black people, in a structure of victim and perpetrator. White males and some Hispanic males provided narratives about power and voice in connection with their affluence/influence in the community, and reaffirmed their false
understanding and narratives about the Stand Your Ground law. In stark contrast, Blacks, White females and some Hispanic/Latino females’ misunderstanding of the Stand Your Ground law related false narratives about its role in acquitting George Zimmerman, and reaffirmed minority group narratives about their feelings of distance from the political system. They also expressed concern about its ability to keep them safe and protected.

Media and journalism in this study were described as synchronous in that the profession provides information to people about their socially constructed world or their democracy in the United States. Intense media coverage creates an unsettling atmosphere for residents of the local community (Kay, Reilly, Connolly, & Cohen, 2010). Again, the impact of news coverage on residents has been found not just to be isolated to the news event and aftermath, but residents of a community also describe experiences of alienation from the community, anger, and renewed feelings of loss and grief years later (Hight & Smyth, 2003; Kay et al., 2010). In a more recent study, more than two years later when the intense media coverage had dissolved, residents expressed feelings of alienation from their community, from their family, friends, and neighbors, and this caused a perceived division in their community (Kay, Reilly, Connolly, & Cohen, 2010).

As such, the researcher found that news media content about legislation perceived to be rooted in historic injustices and institutional racism can be salient for the members of a community, years after an intensely covered news event. This may contribute to minority members’ narratives about powerlessness, isolation, and despair. Additionally, coverage of such legislation described by participants in connection to the Stand Your Ground law was not conveyed in news content constructively, leaving participants confused years later about what absolved George Zimmerman of his actions that led to Martin’s death. Also, participants
shared across all groups that this was the first time they knew about the law (at the start of the Trayvon Martin coverage), and it was the last time they remembered hearing about it as well. Critical race theory asserts that activated stereotypes are influential (Entman, 2007; Entman & Rojecki, 2006). As noted, this project did not specifically focus on stereotypes; however, given its proposed critical race employment, derogatory stereotypes are a factor in people’s feelings of alienation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Gilens, 1996). For many, of the minority participants, their racial identity during the media coverage of the Trayvon Martin incident was described frequently as “that could have been my son, or that could have been me.” And some narratives described Zimmerman as the perpetrator and his role of power, dissolved of responsibility and consequence, because of the Stand Your Ground law.

**Black Lives Matter and Modern Racism**

Another important finding in this study is how tenets of modern racism exist in the Sanford, Florida area, and are linked to the interviewees’ stories about the Black Lives Matter social movement. The concept of modern racism is not a direct focus in this critical race-driven study, but modern racism should be addressed and made transparent when examining political alienation. Moreover, this study recognized that historically, traditional racism prompted the social and civil movements in the early 1900s that acted as catalysts for Blacks to continue to pursue (demand) equal rights and opportunities even amid the Great Depression, World War I, and World War II. However, because of the Black American’s experiences with or knowledge of historic and modern racism, one’s race can be critical to survival (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Domke, 2001; West, 1997).

Thus, the researcher found that White males described the Black Lives Matter movement, which they mainly watched in news coverage, to be annoying, divisive, and ineffective. Some described it as a movement for the media to hype, which added to the tension
and division residents described in their community. White females expressed empathy and a maternal connection to the Black Lives Matter movement, but often share that the coverage in the media of the movement doesn’t take into consideration that “all lives matter.” And Blacks in the local Sanford Florida area describe the Black Lives Matter movement in Sanford after Martin’s death as the origin for Blacks to mobilize and to be heard. They described how this movement was important because their voices were not being heard and their lives were being violated without cause. Perhaps, since historic tenets of inequality and oppression also affected women, there may be a connection to the coverage of participation and empowerment (Armstrong, 2013). Blacks described the movement as being associated with other heightened media events that were racial, violent, and unjust. While the Black Power movement of the 1960s was sensationalized and misrepresented in media for a decade, coverage of the Trayvon Martin tragedy incited millions who took “to the streets in peaceful demonstrations, signed online petitions, spoke out on social media and closely followed these cases because the racial issues are painful and obvious” via Black Lives Matter movement (Bloom, 2012). As such, related narratives may, too, compound in the narratives the feeling entrenched minorities have of being politically alienated from one’s political system.

Other Findings

“To understand is to interpret.
And to interpret is to restate the phenomenon,
in effect to find an equivalent for it.”
-Susan Sontag

Alliances after Trayvon Martin

One finding of this study is that Blacks, Hispanic/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford area all describe local alliances through their identified racial and ethnic group, outside of other groups, and/or within gender groups. However, these identified alliances were not described as
connections that emerged from the Trayvon Martin shooting. Instead, participants described alliances that the researcher observed through emerging themes of interracial/ethnic ties, progress, cooperation, shared interests, and problem solving in their stories about alliances. Critical race theory postulates that in this country, minorities tend to align from their experiences of oppression and marginalization. However, in the United States, racial and ethnic minorities that have endured deliberate acts of discrimination and segregation throughout history, have not all shared in the same experiences, for the same amount of time, and for the same incentives (Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Mills, 1997). This affects whether or not a racial/ethnic group may or may not align. Since Blacks share a very long and painful historic narrative in Florida of being disenfranchised through racism, violence, and injustice, this study’s findings support deep connections and in-group alignments of Blacks in the Black community and somewhat less with Hispanics/Latinos in their ethnic community.

As such, one finding that emerge in the interviews was how the minority groups, e.g., Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos, had created alliances within their own racial and ethnic group in Sanford. White participants were found to have created alliances within their identified gender group, and out-group racial and ethnic cooperation was described as a moral ideal about something “they should do” and “want to do,” as opposed to actively pursuing alliances in the community. White males described cooperation and problem solving acted out through charitable and faith-based programs and institutions. Males, overall, described in their narratives alliances formed through problem solving, while females did not. Hispanic and Latino participants described cooperation in the community as those experiences related to church, where they shared frequent stories about cooperation and progress in the workplace, wage equality, and regarding women advancing professionally.
The researcher found that Black females frequently shared stories about their interracial and ethnic ties, as those stories related to their close-knit peer groups (with family) and those tied to marital unions in their community. White females related alliances to their diverse experiences emerging from leadership circles and formal social groups. For alliances, age, socio-economics, and education played an insignificant role, over the role of one’s racial and ethnic group and gender.

**Oppositions after Trayvon Martin**

Another finding, was the extensive experiences described in reference to questions about oppositions. Participants had a lot to say about experiences connected to opposition, and the narratives’ length was at times extensive. Critical race researchers in field work suggest that stories that communicate suffering and pain are shared in storytelling to alleviate painful memories and to validate deep-rooted narratives on belief systems that can be historic in nature (e.g., genocide and human trafficking) and a part of a group’s identity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). In connection to the large number of stories collected about oppositions, many of them made a connection to the Trayvon Martin shooting. Seven emerging themes linking opposition – violence, racism, inequality, power, division, others, and a fear of going backwards – showed up in each group’s stories. Violence, racism, and division were the most frequent themes.

Additionally, after the researcher probed the participants to describe or explain whether oppositions had developed since Martin’s shooting, Blacks and Whites across the board shared that they had. Blacks, broadly, had more to say about opposition than other groups, especially Black females who described experiences of opposition that were violent and divisive, since the Trayvon Martin shooting. Narratives about violence tended to describe acts of violence toward Black communities, especially toward Black males in those communities, by people perceived to be in power (e.g., Whites, police officers). Black females also described
understanding opposition through violence in local and national news media content, which typically was described as violence and conflict “in their community.” Blacks in general shared their awareness of what they described as historic racism found in local White Supremacist groups like the KKK. While Blacks and Whites described the Trayvon Martin shooting as what brought to the surface new divisions in the community, some participants shared that such divisions were extant and deep-rooted between those who are in power and the disenfranchised. Suggesting that the news event raised people’s awareness, through social media feeds, media coverage, protests, word-of-mouth, and the movement of Black Lives Matter.

Furthermore, the researcher observed that Black males described feeling targeted after the Trayvon Martin shooting and feeling overall victimized and stereotyped through overt and tacit forms of prejudice. Whites frequently shared that they noticed oppositions since Martin’s death, especially between Blacks in the Black community. Here, they say, residents are angry and tense. White females describe concern for the issues of violence and conflict they witness in the community and in the news; in their stories, they describe modern racism. White males made references to Presidential Republican Candidate Donald Trump, calling themselves “Donald Trumps,” and they described annoyance over the Black Lives Matter movement. White males made a point to share, that the Black Lives Matter Movement was adding to the tension and hostility in the community among groups.

**Fear of going back to tense times**

The researcher also found that through the narratives of all groups in the Sanford area, there is a connection to a fear that they (the community) are going backwards in time, back to a time when there was conflict and violence between minority and majority groups. Later in this study, when asked about news events, the participants remembered that since the Trayvon
Martin shooting, White males did not list the racially violent ones as often as females and Blacks did. Hispanics did not frequently fear going backwards in time in their narratives, but they did describe stories about racism and division as they expressed that acts of violence were increasing in their communities and that they were being racially profiled and experienced racism toward their own ethnic groups. The comment related to “Blacks are angry” emerged among Hispanic/Latinos and Whites, and the Hispanic/Latino participants shared feelings that Whites were still in power in their area. Hispanic/Latinos did not fear being physically harmed by Whites as Blacks did. This was of interest to the researcher, since the study focused on Trayvon Martin’s shooting.

**Political alienation linked to Trayvon Martin shooting**

Participants provided extensive descriptions to answers about feelings of political alienation. Black female rank-and-file participants described feelings of powerlessness, despair, and isolation in that order. They also had many more narratives describing feelings of political alienation just as Black males did. Black females regularly shared narratives about feeling powerless against government legislation such as Stand Your Ground, the court system and penal system, and related police brutality. Often, they described the violence against Black males and the Black community, and the lack of resources in their community. Black males were not as vocal about feelings of political alienation and described situations such as the Trayvon Martin incident linked to powerlessness and despair. Systematic disenfranchisement of the Black male voice is a symptom of inequality and historic racism, as cited by critical race theorists. All Blacks shared their concerns about the lack of representation on the local, state and national level and many felt that their voice and needs were not represented in the government and that their communities did not receive the same fair treatment as others. “No taxation, without representation,” said some of the Black participants, both male and female.
In the powerlessness and despair narratives that Blacks, especially females, described, the researcher observed a fear that people in the Black community were not taken care of and were being racially targeted and discriminated against. Rank-and-file Hispanic Latinos also described experiences of powerlessness and feel that Whites are far more influential than Blacks and Hispanic Latinos. Many of the narratives by Hispanic Latino males and females described despair and isolation. But these participants would also share that they were connected to their churches and ethnic communities. Overall, elites did not describe feelings of political alienation. They spoke of their racial groups with empathy and awareness of problems, however, in a way that their narratives were constructed as outside of their in-group, connected through churches and professions to diverse group members.

Finally, the location for fieldwork was significant: Sanford is a central Florida community of 56,002, which 2013 data estimate is 45 percent White, 30 percent Black and 20 percent Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Also, its racial/ethnic composition was salient in the criminal case, and in the overall shooting incident, and offers potential for examining how those three groups relate today in the aftermath of Martin’s death and Zimmerman’s acquittal. Sanford’s political system was heavily criticized. The researcher found that Hispanics/Latinos described being a part of their ethnic community, which seems immune to what occurs in Sanford. However, they do describe experiences as U.S. citizens, and they do reference small in-groups that are connected to their country of origin, or their family’s birth country. As such, the narratives and stories collected during the interviews with Blacks and Whites, provided a richer understanding of the Sanford area and the narratives of local residents.
Limitations

Small-scale researchers should not anticipate that what they find meshes neatly with generalizations offered by large-scale research (Knight, 2002). Notably, qualitative scholars find that large-scale research tends to smooth out the wrinkles of individual variations; it produces at times a picture-perfect, ironed-out scene that may describe a composite average, but disguises the rich complexities found in an individual (Van Geert, 1994). The primary reason that the researcher designed a small-scale project, meant to work with a small number of informants, was to ensure that the smaller the number involved in the study, the deeper the researcher could probe into the lives of various group members.

However, one limitation is that in small-scale work, there is a greater chance that the sample technique will skew the results away from the formulated pattern. In a big way, a larger sample naturally cancels out individual personality traits and behaviors, which beam as headlights into stories not meant to be part of the research design, but are included because of the small number of participants. And while the researcher planned to extensively and tediously dig and probe into the selected group members of the Sanford, Florida area, the amount of data that was collected at each interview, for every participant, was obtuse and answered over 60 semi-structured, open-ended questions, where multiple questions addressed concepts and constructs for analysis. In the end, the disassembling and reassembling process was, at best, exhaustive and overwhelming, dissolving the researcher’s frame of mind originally set at the scene of Trayvon Martin’s shooting, in a community still enduring suffering and division years after Martin’s death. Thus, the depth analysis created, at times, a laborious chore during data reduction. This was different from the way the study began for the researcher in the field, curiously unwinding stories from people’s personal lives that affected their lived experiences in Sanford.
Second, and more importantly, the researcher sought to connect her research findings to a broader understanding of what was being examined, which led to the tacit assumption that individuals are less complex and more homogenous than they really are. Working from thousands of pages of transcripts, post-data collection, removed the life from the stories to some degree. Van Geert (1994) observed that human beings “wiggle.” In a way, the researcher struggled to recall each participant’s uniqueness, once the interview transcripts were produced and the thematic analysis was underway.

Clacson (1998) has suggested that qualitative research should recognize how ever-changing human behavior is. He explained that what gets measured now should be different from what gets measured later (Clacson, 1998). One reason is that people are influenced by emotions and processes, which fall below our consciousness. In short, a related limitation is that while the researcher may blame some misunderstood findings on the small sample size, it could very well be that in human complexity, people tell us what they want to at that point, based on feelings and an interest in telling researchers what they want to hear. So, while it may be useful to use terms such as “motivated” or “identify” there is a risk that our interpretation can’t be treated as it describes real, fixed attributes that affect human actions and words (Harre, 1998; Weick, 1995). Thus, the researcher recognizes this limitation in working with human research subjects, whose answers may be anomalies at times, in part, because he or she may be having a bad day or an unusually good one. For example, sometimes something from the past news event emerges and is affective, as when George Zimmerman gained national attention for posting racists remarks on Twitter while the research was in the process of data collection.

Also, the timing of the 2016 Presidential Campaign could have affected the participants’ answers, knowing in hindsight their news consumption and habits. This
heightened ongoing news event during the study was unusual, given its every-four-year occurrence. The study did not account for how Donald Trump’s campaign might affect minorities and how they answered some questions, or how majority members were possibly influenced by the coverage, also affecting some of their answers. Note for example White males’ references to being “Donald Trumps.” As such, some narratives could be misleading, especially when trying to understand individuals and small groups in specific settings and at a specific time – a historical one, at that. Again, and recurrently, scholars assert that researchers select qualitative techniques unaware of the bicoleur experiences that naturally follow (Denzin & Key, 2011).

Given the time constraints and the researcher’s personal life complexities during data collection, some of the Hispanic/Latino participants were interviewed over the telephone at length. While the researcher felt she was making a genuine connection to the participants interviewed this way, there was much less data collected from those participants and that might have contributed to the researcher feeling that the group was less involved in the Sanford area and shared fewer narratives from their experiences. For example, when researchers are involved in case studies and he/she was in the environment where violence occurred, that researcher would be able to not only observe factors that affect that environment, but listen for new themes not considered early on in the planning, and implement those into the analysis (Seiber, 2012).

The demands of qualitative interviewing can make or break a researcher and the data collection process and fieldwork (Patton, 1990). The researcher’s ability to communicate and practice empathy, sensitivity, humor, and sincerity are important tools for the qualitative interviewer (Ruben and Ruben 1995, Night, 2002). As such, one last limitation worth
mentioning is how the researcher recognizes her racial background and gender identity, and how she was perceived within certain groups, in different settings, including how answers might have been affected as a result. Likewise, how the researcher communicated empathy, joy, sympathy, and focus, and how participants received such communications, can affect and alter the stories of some participants. Seasoned researchers make the case that face-to-face inquiry methods require the researcher to be sufficient as an insider to understand properly what is being examined and communicated. I was not. I am not from Sanford, and I am not a Floridian. However, as a journalist in the field, perhaps, as Clacson (1998) described, that imagination, a richly-lived life, with broad experiences, and gained knowledge aids the researcher in fieldwork, whether in familiar or unfamiliar territory.

**Future Research**

Notably, a primary contribution of this study lies in the fact that it moves beyond the usual question of how intensely covered news affects consumers, to understand how such media coverage affects individual racial and ethnic members in a community where the coverage and crime originated. Much of the literature on crime news and consumers suggests negative influence on racial and ethnic minorities, but no effects, including positive ones, on Whites. However, very little literature examines how people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds perceive one another and how they perceive their own racial and ethnic groups years after coverage ends. Additionally, scant literature considers how intense media coverage in a community may or may not shift people’s perceptions of political alienation. Also, no systematic study has examined the relationship among race, media, and alienation, especially one that enters into a community once saturated by news media for years, to understand in-depth an individual’s experience of political alienation.
In the process of data reduction, qualitative researchers play a critical role in weaving the data down to categories. These categories are experienced and constantly revisited by researcher(s) to draw an interpretive analysis that a human being participated in and brought his or her understanding of the research topic into the meaning-making of a constructed world. Future research might consider addressing how the stories of the researcher, the systematic reflexive experiences documented by the researcher while interviewing people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, may intertwine with the participants’ stories about lived-experiences, including those in the field, to generate autoethnographic accounts of research. In this case, the researcher fully examines during the in-depth interviews and data analysis how her personal race and class wove into the *biculeur* fabric of the current qualitative inquiry project, to further methodological techniques in mass communications (Ellis & Bochner, 2011). But further research addressing method and fieldwork might combine multimodal platforms for communicating collected and reduced data. For example, a filmed documentary, a podcast, and a paper might be used to provide a full experience of the human narrative for other researchers and mainstream applied research interests (solving social and political issues). Explicitly, for four years national news media has covered extremely controversial news events involving race. While the project does not seek to generalize findings, it does hope to set a fieldwork standard following intensely-covered news events for similar future projects in areas like Baltimore, Maryland, where racial riots broke out in spring 2015, and in Ferguson, Missouri, where violence continues after Michael Brown’s death.

With regard to the current research, returning to the field to address the following questions might generate a deeper understanding of social identity connections to media and narratives through what was being examined in Sanford, after Martin’s death. One question,
answered through longer, more engaged ethnographic fieldwork, may be posed, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, what are the social-identifiers described by Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites in the Sanford, Florida area? Another could ask, years after Trayvon Martin was killed, how do Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites describe others outside of their racial and ethnic group in the Sanford, Florida area? Lastly, these questions, through slow research in the field, might uncover even further explanations for the groups examined in this study and expand findings from the current study.

Critical studies employ research as an active platform to enact change in society (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). As this study repeatedly notes, critical race extends this to include academic work and activism. Few mass communication studies consider long-lasting effects of intense media coverage about race and violence. Even fewer have entered into the field to inquire about how various racial and ethnic group members feel years following a news event, especially a news event that included coverage of the dominant racial and ethnic groups in Sanford, Florida – white, black, and Hispanic/Latino (Pew, 2012). In fact, with emerging issues in the news about race and violence and power structures, this study can serve as a catalyst for future research involving race and news media and a roadmap for methodological considerations when conducting interviews that are sensitive covering issues traditionally considered to be sensitive and private. For example, studies that are interdisciplinary in nature can merge research and techniques employed by media scholars, political scientists, and anthropologists. Critical race theorists, like Cornell West, and founders Delgado and Stefancic, all believe that the answers to understanding social behavior amid historic underpinnings of hate, are in the human story and retelling of such. If, indeed, tensions found in race relations, whether latent or manifest, are extant, this study and
further studies, can bring to the surface what issues are related to group members feeling shifts in racial/ethnic alliances that affect their voice in local government and policy (Creswell, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

**Conclusion**

In sum, the Trayvon Martin news event and subsequent case drew heavy news coverage for many of the 19 months between the shooting and the jury’s verdict, in part because of the mixture of race, criminality, and politics in a distinctive locale. Zimmerman did not assert in his defense using Florida’s Stand Your Ground law, which relieves defendants of the burden of retreating before using deadly force. The state’s first-in-the-nation-law was the subject of considerable reportage and commentary. As National Public Radio’s race reporter Eric Deggans (2012) recalled, weeks after the shooting, there was one known fact, that “a young black teen was dead and the man who killed him hadn’t been arrested” (p. 17). However, news media outlets, local and national, were relentless in their efforts to tell the story, which escalated from the night of the shooting, up through the verdict of the racially-charged case that acquitted Zimmerman of second-degree murder and manslaughter charges.

In the Sanford, Florida area, where residents describe deep-rooted prejudices, systematic disenfranchisement and denigration of minorities, include a furtive transferal of historic racism for modern racism. Narratives of Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites describe various disparate experiences of political powerlessness, political isolation, and political despair. There is a danger in some group members feeling that their voices and the needs of their group are not met in a community, while others are. Residents in the community, who already felt alienated from their political system, experienced intense news coverage for years, where racial in-group members were believed to have been victimized and an out-group member in power was acquitted. This acquittal was based upon a misunderstood law, perceived
by minorities to favor people in power, a law which was never actually enacted, but referred to often in the media. The narratives of minorities might be reaffirmed and compounded with prior stories that serve to increase feelings of political alienation.

Additionally, as other news events occur, such as the ones residents describe experiencing and suffering from, affected group members recycled their extant narratives of being oppressed, marginalized, and of a lesser status than other residents in the community. This not only affects people connecting to one-another and to diverse others, but it prevents a political system from operating and representing its members fairly. A result of such effects and the stories people tell themselves and others is that groups don’t align to benefit one another, and oppositions increase. News media is then left to make sense of a community, where residents do not trust or respect news producers, where residents do not feel their stories are fairly represented in media. Ultimately they may decide not to tell their stories to media, which then in turn recycles the narratives on repeat of those critical race postulates who are in power and those not in power.

Scholars seeking to study nationally covered regions where race and violence are salient may gain some insight into this field work, while media producers might gain a deeper understanding of their affective roles in such a community. We know that news media affects mass communication and so, it can be assumed that over time, when racial and ethnic groups are focused on unfairly, alliances and feelings of isolation and alienation may be enacted between in- and out-groups (Delgado, 2000; Delgado, 2000; Domke et al., 2009; Entman, 2012). In brief, critical race appropriately connected the current project examining race, ethnicity, violence, news media, and perceptions of political alienation. Critical race asserts that an effect of America’s entrenched history of racism is a causal condition where historically
marginalized people feel alienated both socially and politically. Uniquely, this study considers political alienation, due to the intense nature of the news media in the environment of the proposed sampling that heavily focused on policy and law, which could be considered to affect racial and ethnic minorities (Kaduce et al., 2014).

Of course, as a field researcher at Ground Zero for Black Lives Matter, the researcher’s experience with diversity continued to broaden and to challenge. Political alienation in such communities was overt and affective. As a White female in research, the researcher had to navigate issues of diversity in areas that were not always safe, hospitable, or trusting. She had to establish relationships with existing community leaders from Hispanic/Latino and Black communities, who were disinterested/distrusting of the media and in some members of a perceived majority group seeking access to their communities and experiences.

Not only did the researcher overcome many of the aforementioned obstacles, but she sought to examine what’s next for fieldwork after an intensely covered event affects various groups involved. One way to further such research is to return to affected communities and assist diverse groups to engage in dialogue to facilitate healing and new collaborative beginnings.

As researchers studying human behavior and mass communication, we must probe under the surface of complex topics such as race, class, and racialized news media coverage to gain a better understanding of the people and their connections in a community where media has once been for a long period. Scholars seeking to study intensely-covered national regions where race and violence are salient may gain some insight into this field work, while media producers might gain a deeper understanding of their affective roles and in such a community.
Dear ___________,

Thank you for considering participating in my research study. Before we move forward in planning, I would like to offer you some information about this particular study.

Firstly, the research seeks to examine, three years after Trayvon Martin’s death and the intense media coverage it inspired, shifts in political alienation among racial/ethnic groups in Sanford, Florida. This study is designed and conducted by Erica Newport, a graduate student at the University of Florida (UF), the principal investigator for this research study. Her supervising faculty dissertation chair at UF is Wayne Wanta, Ph.D.

I’d like you to know about the process, and I hope this is helpful in describing to you what you will be asked to do. Following a brief 10-minute greeting and introduction of the research project, you will be asked 47 semi-structured questions for up to 90 minutes, which will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. At the conclusion of interview, you will be asked if you have any questions or concerns about the interview and/or any of the questions you were asked. You will have the opportunity to recommend participants, as well.

This project should not create any physical, psychological, or economic risks. Most of the questions used in the questionnaire are routinely used by social science scholars employing qualitative techniques and have been adapted to the study for the purpose of addressing this particular news event. No risk associated with the questions has been reported. However, understanding that any time a researcher interviews a participant at length about beliefs and feelings about race, alienation, politics, and news events focused on race and violence, the participant (and the researcher) may be left with new or existing feelings and knowledge about oneself. As such, the in-depth interview can be reflective and change inducing. We do not anticipate that you will benefit directly by participating in this experiment. However, some social scientists using qualitative research techniques, like this one, feel that the in-depth interview can be therapeutic with regard to having the opportunity to share in confidence topics you may not frequently have the space and time to talk about topics that matter to you.

There is no compensation for participating in this research. And your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Additionally, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about the study:

Erica Newport
College of Journalism & Communications at the University of Florida
2310 Weimer Hall, 1885 Stadium Dr., Gainesville, FL 32611-8400
ericanewport@ufl.edu | (c) 941-586-2414
Thank you for your time. If you are interested, please contact me through my email (enewport@ufl.edu) to set up a convenient interview date/time and location, and/or to answer any questions you may have, prior to participating.

Sincerely, Erica Newport
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title:

Three Years After Trayvon Martin’s Death: Is Political Alienation Shifting Across Disparate Racial/Ethnic Group Residents of Sanford, Florida?

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:

This study examines, three years after Martin’s death and the intense media coverage it inspired, the disparate shifts in political alienation among those three racial/ethnic groups.

This study is designed and conducted by Erica Newport, a graduate student at the University of Florida (UF), the principal investigator for this research study. Her supervising faculty dissertation chair at UF is Wayne Wanta, Ph.D.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

Following a brief 10-minute greeting and introduction of the research project, you will be asked 47 semi-structured questions for up to 90 minutes, which will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. At the conclusion of interview, you will be asked if you have any questions or concerns about the interview and/or any of the questions you were asked. The information for a local mental health counseling service will be shared with you, in the event you feel you need to speak with a professional about any topics that were affective. Additionally, you will have an opportunity to recommend someone you know, preferably someone who is the same gender and the same racial/ethnic background as you are, to participate in this study. Lastly, the researcher will provide you with a business card, in the event you would like to contact me at a later date to ask a question or to recommend a research participant for this study.

Time required:

Up to 90 minutes.

Risks and Benefits:

This project should not create any physical, psychological, or economic risks. Most of the questions used in the questionnaire are routinely used by social science scholars employing qualitative techniques and have been adapted to the study for the purpose of addressing this particular news event. No risk associated with the questions has been reported. However, understanding that any time a researcher interviews a participant at length about beliefs and feelings about race, alienation, politics, and news events focused on race and violence, the
participant (and the researcher) may be left with new or existing feelings and knowledge about oneself. As such, the in-depth interview can be reflective and change inducing. We do not anticipate that you will benefit directly by participating in this experiment. And the researcher is not offering anything to the research participants for their participation in the study; however, some social scientists using qualitative research techniques, like this one, feel that the in-depth interview can be therapeutic with regard to having the opportunity to share in confidence topics you may not frequently have the space and time to talk about topics that matter to you. If you feel you need to speak with a counselor about the topics addressed in this interview, please contact your local county supported agency:

Seminole Community Mental Health Center, which provides in-patient and out-patient mental health services to low income Seminole County residents. Their address is 237 Fernwood Boulevard, Fern Park, FL, 32708, and their telephone and website is (407) 831-2411 and www.scmhc.com.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this research.

Confidentiality:
Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number by the researcher. Any identifiers for you and other participants will be deleted in your transcribed interview. These interviews, which have been assigned a code number and swept clean of identifiers, will be archived on a whole-machine encrypted personal computer, owned by the researcher. As such, your name will not be used in any report; however, quotes and/or paraphrases from the interviews will be used in the reports. The researcher will strive to avoid any identifying material, but the researcher cannot guarantee that the participant cannot be identified through these quotes/paraphrases. For the purpose of the study, interview questions address race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic and other details about the participant, which may or may not be discussed in the report. Again, responses will be anonymous.

Voluntary participation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.
Who to contact if you have questions about the study:

Erica Newport  
College of Journalism & Communications at the University of Florida  
2310 Weimer Hall, 1885 Stadium Dr., Gainesville, FL 32611-8400  
ericanewport@ufl.edu | (c) 941-586-2414

Who to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

IRB02 Office  
Box 112250  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL 32611-2250  
(352) 392-0433

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: __________________________________________
Date: _______________

Principal Investigator: _________________________________
Date: _______________
APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Adapted from Stephen Craig’s political behavior field research work:

A) Let’s start off by talking about you.

1.) I’d like to begin by having you tell me a little about yourself. For example, how long have you lived in Sanford, Florida?

2.) What year were you born?

3.) Where did you grow up? Where else have you lived?

4.) Are you married? Do you have children?

5.) How many years of school did you complete?

6.) What do you do for a living? (If appropriate:) What does your spouse do for a living?

7.) How do you describe your (If appropriate, your family’s) financial situation in the past? For example, in the past did you feel privileged or underprivileged?

8.) What about now? Do you feel privileged or underprivileged?

9.) Would you describe yourself as being a part of the upper class, middle class, working class, or lower class? Why do you say that?

B) Now, if you don’t mind, I’d like to talk to you a little bit about religion.

10.) Are you a part of a religious or spiritual community, for example, a church, or synagogue, or mosque? Which one, if yes, do you attend? Are you active in that community, outside of attending services? If yes, how so?

11.) When you were growing up, was your family a part of a religious or spiritual community? Were your parents, or guardians, religious?

C) Let’s next discuss membership.

12.) Are you a member of any organizations that meet regularly or collect dues? (Probes for political, social, cultural, community, professional, or union.) Are you active in any of these organizations? Do any of them take stands on political issues or endorse candidates for public service?

D) Next, I’d like to understand your background a bit more.
13.) Are you an American? If no, what nationality are you?

14.) What do you consider to be your main racial or ethnic group?

15.) What do you think other people consider your main racial or ethnic group is?

16.) This next question’s answer about gender identity may seem obvious, but I’d like to ask if you think of yourself as a male or female?

E) I’m curious about how you feel and think about your life generally and specifically.

17.) In general, how satisfied are you with your life? If you could change anything, what would it be? Anything else? Do you expect things in your life will get better or worse for you in the future, or do you expect they will stay pretty much the same?

18.) What about Sanford? What would you change about Sanford? Anything else? Do you feel things in Sanford are getting better or worse for its residents, or do you feel things are about the same? Why do you feel this way? What are some of the most important problems facing Sanford?

19.) What about Florida? What would you change about Florida? Anything else? Do you feel things in Florida are getting better or worse for its residents, or do you feel things are about the same? Why do you feel this way? What are some of the most important problems facing Florida?

20.) What about the country as a whole? Do you feel things have been getting better, worse, or staying about the same? Why do you feel this way? What are some of the most important problems facing the country?

21.) You mentioned earlier that you are _______. (Here, insert the participant’s racial/ethnic background he or she identified as.) Do you feel for _______ (Here, insert the participant’s racial/ethnic background he or she identified as.) things are getting better or worse, or staying about the same? Why do you feel this way? What are some of the most important problems facing _______ (Here, insert the participant’s racial/ethnic background he or she identified as.) people?

22.) What about for_______(Here, insert Blacks, Whites, Hispanics/Latinos, depending on what the participant’s racial/ethnic background he or she identified as, isn’t.)? Are things getting better or worse, or have things stayed about the same over the past few years? Why do you feel this way?

23.) What about for_______(Here, insert Blacks, Whites, Hispanics/Latinos, depending on what the participant’s racial/ethnic background he or she identified as, isn’t and depending on what was listed in above question.)? Are things getting better or worse, or have things stayed about the same over the past few years? Why do you feel this way?
24.) Do you feel you are affected by what happens to people from your racial/ethnic background outside of Sanford, Florida? If so, where?

25.) Do you feel you are affected by what happens to people in Sanford, Florida, from your racial/ethnic background?

26.) What do you know or remember about the civil rights movement? Do you feel you have benefited from the civil rights movement in your everyday experiences?

27.) You mentioned earlier that you are ________. (Here, insert the participant’s gender identity he or she identified as.) Do you feel for ________ (Here, insert the plural of participant’s gender identity he or she identified as.) things are getting better or worse, or stayed about the same over the past few years? Why do you feel this way? What are some of the most important problems facing_______ (Here, insert the plural of participant’s gender identity he or she identified as.)?

F) Next, I’d like to know more about how you feel and think about others in Sanford, Florida.

28.) Do you feel that Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites are working together today to help one another in Sanford, Florida? If yes, how so? Can you share with me an example of this kind of cooperation?

29.) Do you feel that Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites are working against each other today in Sanford, Florida? If yes, how so? Can you share with me an example of this kind of opposition?

30.) If yes, do you feel this opposition you described is new since the shooting of Trayvon Martin?

31.) Specifically, do you feel that Blacks and Hispanics are getting along in Sanford, Florida? If yes, how so? If no, why do you feel they are not getting along?

G) The next set of questions relate to news media.

32.) How often do you tune in to the news today? How do you hear about news? For example, if you hear about news through a device or through multiple devices, which one(s)?

33.) Can you remember anything in the news during the past few years that made you really mad? (For each event: Why did it make you mad? Whose fault do you think it was? Did you try to do anything about it at that time? Do you think there’s anything that could be done?)

34.) Can you remember anything in the news during the past few years that gave you a strong sense of satisfaction? (For each event: Why did you feel that way? Who should get the credit for it?)
35.) As I shared earlier this study is focused on the Trayvon Martin shooting. I’d like to ask you, if you don’t mind, what do you remember about Trayvon Martin’s shooting? What about the news media coverage after the shooting? What do you remember about that?

36.) Specifically, I’d like to ask you what do you remember about “Stand Your Ground” law and the Trayvon Martin shooting?

37.) Generally speaking, what other stories in news media since the shooting can you recall?

H) Next, I’ll ask you some questions about government and community.

38.) When you hear the word “government,” what’s the first thing that comes to mind?

39.) What is your understanding of the meaning of democracy? What do you think are the advantages of democracy as compared with other forms of government? What kinds of things would you consider undemocratic?

40.) Do you feel connected to your community in Sanford, Florida?

41.) Generally, do you feel Blacks are connected to the community in Sanford, Florida? Do you feel Blacks are influential in Sanford’s local government?

42.) Generally, do you feel Hispanics/Latinos are connected to the community in Sanford, Florida? Do you feel Hispanics/Latinos are influential in Sanford’s local government?

43.) Generally, do you feel Whites are connected to the community in Sanford, Florida? Do you feel Whites are influential in Sanford’s local government?

44.) We are nearing the end of the interview, and I’d like to ask you three more sets of questions. Suppose that a law were being considered by Congress that you felt was unjust or harmful. What do you think you could do about it? If you made an effort to change this law or to prevent it from being passed in the first place, how likely is it that you would succeed? If such a case arose, what are the odds that you would actually try to do something about it?

45.) Suppose that a law or regulation were being considered by the local government here in Sanford that you felt was unjust or harmful. What do you think you could do about it? If you made an effort to change this law or to prevent it from being passed in the first place, how likely is it that you would succeed? If such a case arose, what are the odds that you would actually try to do something about it?

46.) Lastly, do you think people like you have too little power, too much power, or just about the right amount? (If too little:) What do you think are the reasons for this? (If too much:) Why do you say that? How did you interpret the phrase in this question, “people like you?”

47.) Is there anything else you’d like to add? Is there anything we haven’t talked about that you feel we should have? Is there anything you’d like to ask me?
APPENDIX D
ABBREVIATIONS

Cell One: Black

BL = Black
F = Female
M = Male
R = Rank-and-File
E = Elite
#s – Secure Code

Cell Two: White

WH = White
F = Female
M = Male
R = Rank-and-File
E = Elite
#s – Secure Code

Cell Three: Hispanic/Latino

HL = Black
F = Female
M = Male
R = Rank-and-File
E = Elite
#s – Secure Code

Demographic Codes Used Strictly by Researcher to Aid Analysis

Age/Marital and Family Status/Education/Class/Religion/Membership
# MwC (Married with Children) ED or X C (Christian) Y/N Yes/No
# DwC (Divorced with Children) J (Jewish)
# D (Divorced) M (Muslim)
# M (Married) S (Spiritual)
# S (Single)
# W (Widow)
Class:

U (Upper)
M (Middle)
W (Working)
L (Lower)

Sample:

BLFE29
56/MwC/ED/MUC/C/Y
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Erica Newport is a communications/diversity/race/media scholar and speaker in Florida. She is a seminal researcher for Ground Zero of Black Lives Matter, following the Trayvon Martin shooting by George Zimmerman. She was funded during her Ph.D. pursuits through a graduate assistantship from the College of Journalism and Communications and a grant via the Graduate Minority Studies at the University of Florida, where she served as a communication and media instructor and a graduate assistant researcher. She is instructing speech and interpersonal communications in Tampa, FL. She successfully defended her dissertation internationally in Shanghai at the Shanghai Research Studies Institute and served as a guest lecturer/researcher in communications there and in Hong Kong at City University.

Newport was a featured alumnus in American University’s American Magazine during her Ph.D. studies. Additionally, she has consulted on race and power for popular television programs and served as a contributing nonfiction humor writer for a publication in New York, NY. Prior to securing ABD status, she was instructing and serving as a writing/editing coach for long-form storytelling at NPR, University of Florida, for WUFT, 89.1, and PBS media. She served as a judge for the 2014 Society of American Travel Writers. Newport is a mentor to graduating seniors pursuing final projects that are research driven, and she was invited to write/present short stories from a magical realism perspective at the highly respected Haystack Institute, in Maine.

Newport’s undergraduate degree is from East Carolina University, where she was a news director for the campus radio station and reported for a local affiliated CBS station. Her master’s degree is from American University, Washington, D.C., where she wrote for local print and online newspapers, magazines, and served as media and outreach director and advocate journalist for multiple social justice, public policy think tanks. For five years, she wrote for the Sarasota
Herald Tribune, when owned by NYT Company, where she reported on issues affecting marginalized populations and community affairs. Previously, she was a community digital journalist for the Bradenton Times, a community news site Newport helped to develop and launch.

Her post-Ph.D. studies and service will provide a platform for her continued critical studies research, advancing qualitative methodology not only to encourage scholars to study communities after a tragic event that gains national media coverage, but to inspire scholars to share their research with such communities to facilitate dialogue and healing. She will continue to pursue opportunities for conferencing and publishing, and opportunities to teach/mentor students from diverse backgrounds and interests. Additionally, she will develop and execute creative projects focused on her research areas that are applied and purposeful, seek out space and time to contribute to an institutional village and its public community, to bridge communities, media, and academic research.