

**We Are (Not) Here to Teach You:
Talking Race and Racism on Tumblr**

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have been increasingly optimistic regarding how young people of color push back against mainstream racial discourses using social media tools. However, young people on the micro-blogging site Tumblr who do so are heavily criticized by other young people for engaging in ways seen as superficial, too emotional, and even hostile towards white people. In my thesis, I look at over 50 race-themed blogs, supplemented with interviews with blog moderators to see why their conversations are so controversial. Ultimately, I argue that these race-themed blogs are, for people of color primarily, community-oriented instructional spaces that critique damaging racial narratives. Further, the conversational themes reflect a collective action mindset, though youth are *already* taking action to transform this platform to support communities of people of color.

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INTRODUCTION

I joined the micro-blogging platform Tumblr when I was just beginning high school, using it to kill time by looking at humor blogs.

Occasionally, and only accidentally, I would stumble on funny posts about race and racism, and on content I simply related to on what it was like to be Latina. I rarely had a chance to hear these topics in my wealthy and predominantly white school, so I used these posts to find



blogs that shared content specifically on racial issues. While my initial intention was just to pursue content that made me laugh and helped pass the afternoon hours away before starting homework, I ended up encountering content that went beyond simply being funny, but used a vocabulary that was new to me to express frustrations about race and racism and about things that were happening in the media and in everyday life.

At that young age, I had only vague suspicions about the role of race in my life. As the daughter of Puerto Rican and Ecuadorian immigrants, I grew up in a lavish resort town that catered primarily to white and wealthy tourists who came to spend a few weeks at their summer homes. I was increasingly confronted with the fact that these homes are sustained by immigrants like my parents who were virtually always maintaining these properties, and never living within them. Though I saw injustice firsthand the racial disparity in the economic and racial segregation in my hometown, I didn't have the tools nor the vocabulary to even question these facts, as they seemed immutable and not open to scrutiny.

Thus, it was only unintentionally that I began to see what it was like to critically engage with race, to call out the way race is often invisible and unquestioned, and how it influences

everyday life. Posts on Tumblr were my first introduction to the fact that I *could* and *should* be

This is how you arrest a white man who shot 9 people, and this is how you arrest a black man for selling cigarettes



dreamybrowngirl:

Can we talk about something really quickly? Can we talk about how the shooter wasn't even handcuffed? He murdered 9 people and when they found him they gave him a bullet proof vest and didn't even handcuff him, can we talk about that bullshit?

Reblog

51,743 notes

angry about racial injustices that were not immediately obvious to me, growing up in the environment that I did, and in a society that accepts blatant inequality among racial lines as the status quo. I don't blame my younger self for not questioning racial inequity and injustice around me, as these were not conversations being held on the media, nor in my school.

In an image or in a few lines, posts on Tumblr were making poignant declarations and opening my eyes to critiques that I would only

come to encounter formally in my sociology classes, years later as an undergraduate at Swarthmore College. It was then that I realized that the scholars I was reading in class were making similar observations and critiques against the racial status quo as the bloggers on Tumblr that I had kept up with years before. The key difference was that on Tumblr, people often talked in ways that were unapologetically emotional, at times sarcastic and mocking, but also just funny and accessible.

However, I realized that using Tumblr was a controversial act to many. In particular, people who engage with social issues on Tumblr were seen to many youth as creating a toxic environment, where the way they were talking about race

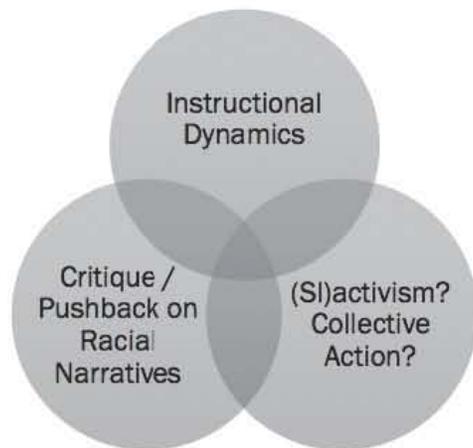


was excessively personal, inappropriately hostile towards white people, and overall engaging in a harmful environment. To be specific, what I label as “controversial” blogs in my research are blogs that speak on race and racism with curses (“fuck your oppression”), or feature imagery that can be seen as inflammatory (middle fingers or photos mocking whiteness), or post mocking whiteness in general (“we don’t have time for white tears”), or simply exclude white people from their space (See Appendix B & C for examples).

I was absolutely stumped by this problem. How was it that I learned so much from Tumblr, that content on Tumblr allowed me “stay woke” on racial injustice in ways parallel to ideas circulated in academia, all while occurring in a platform dismissed by so many? Was the essence of what I was learning no longer valid because of the ways that these conversations took on a controversial tone? It was with uncertainty that I began my research on Tumblr. Further, all the literature pointed towards theories like participatory politics and expanding forms of civic engagement, yet there was still a disconnect in how different groups found (or didn’t find) meaning in the same activity.

While my initial interest in beginning research was in “proving” that young people could be using Tumblr as a place to learn useful ways to challenge the status quo, I couldn’t pretend these learning processes were occurring in a vacuum. It was obvious that bloggers have other motives that color the instructional dynamics that I was trying to outline. Beyond that, I could see I had to engage with other debates playing out in this space, debates related to the legitimacy of the ways people of color choose to talk about race and racism, and the argument that simply speaking online was not at all an effective way of engaging with social issues, but merely apathetic teens engaging in “slactivism,” or, fleeting and insubstantial engagement with social

issues (Sengupta 2015). These questions all came into play, fighting for the foreground in my research, and becoming more and less salient at various points as my research progress.



To grapple with these concurrent issues, I started on what I found to be the most solid ground and easiest to demonstrate: that Tumblr was a space where young people of color were critiquing damaging racial narratives found in the media and in everyday life and pushing back with their own

counternarratives. These damaging racial narratives include, for instance, ones that explicitly or implicitly paint people of color as inherently lesser, ones that blame people of color for racialized structural violence and oppression, and narratives that dehumanize racial and ethnic groups by stereotyping them as a whole. What I found was that these blogs were also encouraging the celebration of racial and ethnic identities, and sharing stories on the struggles of being a person of color. In the candidness, casualness, and humor of this platform, conversations were often controversial to some because they could be dismissive of or joke about whiteness.

What I strongly suspected I could *also* argue was that other people could be using Tumblr and genuinely learning, much like I had. In my research I couldn't measure *what* people learn or *how much* they were learning, so I looked instead at how scholars have studied learning processes in participatory online cultures to sketch out for myself what were the instructional dynamics in these blogs that *could* support learning.

Finally, and this is the most tentative part of my research, I wanted to engage with this idea that blogging on Tumblr was not just slactivism, but instead a form of action - in that young people were speaking out and pushing each other to open their eyes. For that I turned to the literature on collective action to see how conversations on Tumblr reflected the elements of a collective action frame of thinking. However, I remained open to the possibility that we shouldn't just look at Tumblr in terms of its potential, but recognize the legitimacy of the ways that youth *right now* are taking action everyday in the way they engage with and transform this platform.

In brief, I argue that there is a youth-led collaborative environment on these race-themed blogs that supports learning processes through the instructional dynamics of moderator / community interactions. Further, many youth are choosing to critique race here using controversial language, not for the purpose of disparaging whites, but as a way to freely express to each other the frustration, anger, and exhaustion of issues they face as people of color. Last, I argue that the strong thematic trends of identifying injustices, of recognizing one's agency in changing social situations, and of building group identity facilitate the development of a collective-action mindset. However, if we expand our definition of civic engagement, we are able to understand how youth are taking action everyday around race by organizing within and shaping these online platforms to best serve their own communities.

I make these arguments by looking at race-themed blogging in three different ways. First, I pull data from over 50 race-themed blogs, looking at things such as their organizational structures, their language use, and their blog goals to discern patterns in how race-themed blogging is handled. I supplement this wider look at Tumblr with 2 in-depth case studies of race-themed blogs, focusing on the aesthetic experience of using these pages as well as looking at the

language choice in their blog pages, before pulling posts directly from that blog to analyze trends as well. Lastly, I ground my interpretations of these events with narratives from two moderators of race-themed blogs, using the longevity of their deep involvement with Tumblr to see how Tumblr has changed as a platform, and to understand from the blog side how moderators view their work and their responsibility to community members.

Understanding the tensions between different youth demographics, and the way youth respond to racial narratives as a group are increasingly salient questions in the current historical moment. As the nation experiences deep ruptures over issues like the Black Lives Matters protests and the influx (and desired expulsion) of immigrants, it's more important now than ever before for youth to be able to question beyond what the mainstream media offers them, and situate themselves within a larger historical moment of continued structural racism. That youth are fiercely and unapologetically fighting back against damaging racial narratives is an important snapshot into how younger students are getting exposure to and participating in conversations that are critical of the status quo, and becoming immersed in a common language and practice of naming race and racism as having both invisible- and structural- level effects.

In this thesis, I first go over what Tumblr is, looking at other more commonly-known social media platforms to see how Tumblr diverges as a space uniquely oriented towards younger demographics. I introduce the negative reputation that Tumblr has that makes it distinct from other social media sites that have been similarly studied. In the literature review, I introduce recent scholarship on how young people of color creatively contest mainstream narratives online to build off of later with more specific detail on how Tumblr's practices diverge from these. I then build upwards regarding the question of civic engagement, looking at theories of participatory cultures and alternative media outlets to participatory politics before finishing with

cultural theories on social movements. I finish by introducing William Gamson's (1992) theory of collective action as my main theoretical framework to see how online conversations support the development of a political consciousness. I bridge this literature with scholarship on informal learning and teaching before concluding with a look at the major strands of racial discourses in the US.

After a look into my methodology, I then conclude with three chapters of data analysis, beginning with the two case studies alongside the wider sweep of race-themed blogs, before focusing on the narratives of the two interviews set together with several patterns of activities on Tumblr that sheds light into how we should understand interactions around Tumblr from the perspective of someone with longevity of involvement, and the unique perspectives of running popular race-themed blogs.

BACKGROUND

Why do we need to engage with this online platform in particular, when other platforms hosting similar activities have already been studied? I argue that to theorize on online spaces only in a general way, as if the activities of one space transfers cleanly from platform to platform, obscures the crucial differences in how young people interact with and interact within different online spaces. Since the online sphere is neither a monolithic space nor composed of a rigid and set range of activities, seemingly similar sites are host to very different practices, and attract very different populations, as we will see later on. To consider Tumblr's particular online practices in terms of their instructional potential, as a pushback on issues around race, we first need to have a firm understanding of the dynamics of and patterns in these race-themed blogs. Importantly, we still must allow for divergences in how youth interpret the space itself and their own activities.

I begin by briefly outlining what Tumblr is, how it functions, and what makes it distinct from other social media platforms, particularly in how it allows users to engage with the public as a collaborative audience. I discuss the differences in reputation that I have observed in the way young people view Tumblr as a social media platform. I address the blurring of the public and private on Tumblr, and the way the website seems to trouble "adult" understandings of how online platforms functions. Last, I introduce my reservations on using the word "community" to describe actors on Tumblr, before closing with an exploration of what about this community is so controversial to have earned it a negative reputation among other youth.

General Characteristics: Tumblr as an Online Platform



Tumblr is an extremely popular micro-blogging platform, and as of March 2015, host to over 200 million blogs and over 100 billion posts (Connelly 2015: 1). In

2014, it was the 16th most popular website in the US, and is predominantly used by people ages 13-24 (Chang et. al 2014: 1; Connelly 2015: 3). Connelly (2015) aptly describes Tumblr as a mix between Twitter and traditional online blogging (3). Users benefit from the ease of Twitter's quick posting style, but have the benefit of producing content in a range of mediums (video, image, audio, short and long text post) without the constraint of a word-limit and in a way that is more visually easy to absorb, all in one page without having to navigate away to open new links. Tumblr is very much content-driven, where users are not looked down on for posting or reblogging substantial amounts of content.

Users create blog pages, with a range of options to choose from on the spectrum for anonymity versus full identification. Some users keep themselves completely anonymous, some include a basic description of age, gender identification, and geographic region, and others may even include a picture and their name. Users can blog anonymously and individually, but they can also share responsibility for a blog with others, which is known as taking the position of "moderator." Being a moderator can be a very formal position, as the larger, more popular public blogs often solicit applications from users who want to moderate for a blog. These applications are to ensure that users are able to commit to the level of responsibility necessary to run popular blogs, and ensure that they are knowledgeable in the topics that the blog addresses. In this way,

blogs can pass from hand to hand, as moderators come and go, and blogs transition as collective ownership changes.

Outside of the creation of original posts, users are largely reblogging the content of other blogs they've subscribed to ("followed") to see their content. This occurs because the activities (original posts and reblogs) of the blogs that each user follows appears on the home feed of that user, and the home feeds of all the other users who elected to follow that particular blog. By following users and being followed, content spreads rapidly among young people on Tumblr, even outside of the social circles

blogs may be involved in. Just like on platforms like Facebook, users can click 'like' on posts they see, and can annotate by commenting publicly on the content, which can often result in a back-and-forth exchange among

users. In this way, it can resemble a Twitter or Facebook feed, in seeing content from others on a home feed and being able to comment. However, one crucial difference is that posts circulate much more widely than on Facebook. What this means is that many of the posts users encounter may have already been seen and shared by dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of users, and will likely continue to pass on to many other users. Therefore, content isn't meant to exclusively speak to a personal social circle like Facebook posts often do.

Another important difference is that choosing to follow a blog doesn't have to be mutual. What this means is that a blog will follow another that isn't following back, and the decision to

How would you spot and interact with an abusive individual in social justice circles? *

Are you available to do a short video interview over Skype, Tinchat or Google Hangout? *

- Yes
 No

Please put down your preferred method of contact so we can send you a list of sample questions or situations you might handle as a mod. *

mutually follow aren't primarily based on *offline* friendship ties. Instead, users often follow other blogs based on that blog's content or theme being interesting or relevant to their own interests. This can result in certain blogs amassing large followings because they are seen as engaging thoroughly and frequently with a theme, like photography, identity, or fashion, for instance. That youth collectively constitute these large followings of popular themed blogs that are run by otherwise "ordinary" young people is a central focus of this study, as it raises questions on the dynamics of these relationships, and whether we can accurately understand them as communities, particularly when they initiate and engage in common actions.

How do users find themed blogs that relate to their interests? Because an important aspect of Tumblr is the public availability of original posts, many users will label posts (called "tagging") with a searchable hashtag. Thus, original posts on a specific topic can be found by anyone who uses Tumblr's search option to look for content that exists in that hashtag. Moderators often tag topics they are interested in so that others interested in that topic as well can search within the archives of one blog. For instance, for a user interested in colonialism visiting a race-themed blog will be able to run a search for the word "colonialism" and find all material that a popular blog has published with that tag- answered questions, images, long text posts, and other content. With the Tumblr-wide search function, users can search a specific tag and see content from any user across Tumblr who has written under that tag, especially if the post has grown in popularity and has risen to the forefront of the search box results.

As for recognizing the popularity of a post, each post has a number of "notes" which indicates the amount of times the post has been reblogged or liked by others. Since reblogging, commenting, and liking posts sends it to your own followers' home pages, it can really affect the post's popularity and allow it to spread as your followers go on to like or reblog the post too. The

idea of tagging content for archiving posts on a subject matter will prove important later on as we delve into instructional dynamics and the potential for learning processes to occur.

Public versus Private Spaces

To return back to a comparison with Facebook, it's necessary to point out two key differences: the unique "public privacy" of Tumblr, and the contradictions of how Tumblr exists as a platform with a specific reputation, in comparison to the more neutral reputations of platforms like Facebook and Twitter that appeal to fairly wide demographics. Regarding the public/private dynamic, one of Tumblr's most striking features is how it is "both private and community oriented" (Dewey 2014), where users are able to share intimate thoughts in a way that may not be common on websites where audiences are a mixed range of acquaintances, both near and distant.

Consider how youth on Facebook often carefully screen what goes on their profiles, and use status updates to share content to a *known* audience of family, friends, and acquaintances. On Tumblr, you may also choose to connect with friends, but larger blogs are often followed by strangers who are able to read each post. Thus, they write with this public audience in mind. In contrast to how people can use their blogs as personal diaries and just reblog posts they enjoy, people can create *public* Tumblrs that have a purpose outside of a personal profile. These public blogs with explicit goals or purposes will be the focus of this study, rather than personal blogs that may lack a theme or orientation towards serving an audience.

Contrasting Reputations & Complicating "Community"

Though this study uses the word "community" to refer to the groups of young people who participate in race-themed blogging, I seek to complicate the simplicity of this idea. If we

are theorizing on the possibility of *collective* action, then addressing in what ways the label “community” both fits and fails to describe these interactions is an important element of thinking through the realities and the possibilities of this space.

Content on Tumblr is largely specific to youth, as Tumblr’s users are much younger on average than the populations of other online platforms (Dewey 2014). Considering this specific demographic, the Washington Post writes that Tumblr is “the pulsing heart of youth internet culture,” something that “jaded, confused adults” are only able to glimpse but not fully grasp (Dewey 2014). My own experience suggests to me that Tumblr is an unknown entity for many adults, as they often lack the cultural capital needed to fully immerse within and navigate the complex, multi-layered environment. Many Tumblr blogs are oriented towards things like ongoing jokes in social media, fan cultures, events in pop culture, and it is not easy to understand the subtle references.

The tendency to group around common themes makes Tumblr very interesting compared to individual-oriented platforms, and raises questions on the way youth act individually but also participating in the creation of some sort of shared knowledge on a theme. Much of Tumblr is what Caitlin Dewey calls a “vast, unmapped network of niche communities,” (Dewey 2015). These communities of shared interests are not rigidly bound, nor do users necessarily define themselves within them. For instance, a user may run a blog exclusively to share art for a public audience, or may use their blog to simply share any content they like which may involve reblogging public-oriented art blogs. In the latter, while the blog is still public, its public availability as a thematic resource for a community isn’t the goal that drives reblogging, as content may be intermingled with unrelated content or personal musings.

These loose communities often have specific reputations on Tumblr. Whereas a theme like food blogging is on the neutral side, other themes like body positivity or social justice blogs often have negative reputations. These reputations exist not only within Tumblr but outside too. Despite Tumblr's huge user-base and popularity, other websites and even posts on Tumblr itself mock the concerns of Tumblr users interested in issues of social justice. Reddit, another highly popular online communities platform, has multiple forums specifically to mock progressive Tumblr users. The largest, called r/TumblrinAction, had over 280,000 subscribers as of May 2016. That forum has a glossary of terms, and in that glossary states: "The favourite pastime for [Tumblr social justice bloggers] is to pretend they're oppressed, and they are all professional victims" ("Evilfuckingsociopath" 2014). In an article about the "war" between Tumblr and Reddit, Miri Mogilevski (2014) writes:

Tumblr is often stereotyped as a radically liberal community that makes a social justice issue out of anything and everything. Tumblr has emerged as a scapegoat for everything that's perceived "bad" about social justice: the negative attitudes towards dominant groups, the endless stream of new labels and slang, the elevation of niche issues to the status of "major" issues like race, class, and gender.... "Tumblr social justice" is a pejorative now, as is "Social Justice Warrior (SJW)," a common label for those blogging about the subject on Tumblr.

This quote is a very accurate summary of a problem that I think eludes many researchers who study and celebrate how youth online engage in social media practices that challenge the status quo. The niche community I study consists of race-themed blogs, and users who reblog posts about racism and injustice. This leaves them squarely at the center of this type of negative reputation, where these bloggers' concerns and attitudes are not only ignored but also actively dismissed and mocked. Rather than dismiss either opinion, my research grapples with these divisions regarding what the literature often generalizes simply as "youth" (a homogenous whole) undertaking "youth online practices."

Where this problem of Tumblr's negative reputation leaves us is in a very interesting position of tension. Not only is there a disagreement among youth about the value of blogs within Tumblr, but we also have to consider that there is significant literature that demonstrate an increasing optimistic view in how young people creatively use social media to respond to public events and contest mainstream discourses (Cohen & Kahne 2012, Daniels 2012, Connelly 2015, Watkins 2014, Byrne 2008). These tensions manifests themselves strongly in this platform, as it is in Tumblr where ideas of social justice are integrated into a public space to an extent not seen in other platforms, hence the term "social justice *warrior*." Therefore, my research works to stress against homogenizing what young people think and do, as scholarship currently does in painting a broad celebratory or disdainful brushstroke on these online practices.

Rather than shy away from these tensions and conflicts, we should probe into them to see what we can glean about the divisions in how larger society interacts on issues of race. Youth online do not act in a vacuum, nor do they imagine themselves existing online in a vacuum. Because these blogs are made specifically for public use, the way they structure conversations and the pushback they get on these conversations on race sheds light on how youth want to or think they should engage with race, and in this space, they can explore what those landscapes may look like, seeing as they have the power to shape dynamics of conversations here.

To turn briefly to Lois Weis & Michelle Fine's (2012) notion of critical bifocality, my research works to make visible what the authors refer to as "the linkages, tensions, and solidarities within and among groups over time" (174). Groups are not coherent and bounded, and this is important to keep in mind as we begin to observe the myriad of ways that blogs approach speaking about race and ethnicity, and approach the public audience for whom they make themselves available. In this way, we can make the link between structure and individual

lives that Weis & Fine call for, and link these activities into larger developments of racial narratives in the US that make these talking race on Tumblr so necessary and yet so controversial.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In grounding this study, I will first review the literature that highlights the rising interest in the ways young people use social media to respond to public events and contest mainstream discourses, particularly around race (Cohen & Kahne 2012, Daniels 2012, Connelly 2015, Watkins 2014, Byrne 2008). It's from this that I work to build a more nuanced understanding, with these tensions. Because of the evolving nature of online spaces, youth engage in a wide range of activities that are often outside of how challenges to the status quo are traditionally imagined. If we agree that online spaces, attitudes, and conversations are reflections of outside dynamics, then we should work to imagine beyond traditional ideas of "legitimate" ways of critically engaging with race and racism. This means expanding beyond existing research that largely focuses on studying the spectrum of civic engagement on Twitter to explore the dynamics and demographics of Tumblr.

To engage with questions of the civic value of online practices, I look first at how scholars consider these online practices as more than simply exerting voice in creative ways, but as a form of political engagement – as potentially growth towards political consciousness, individual activism, even as collective action (Connelly 2015, Watkins 2014, Cohen & Kahne 2012, Sengupta 2015). Theories like these are not without controversy, as there is both scholarly and public skepticism about the significance of social media in taking action on social issues and against injustice. I will then look at the theoretical boundaries of social movements before scaling down and employing William Gamson's (1992) collective action framework to think about how themes in conversations on Tumblr might support mobilization for change against injustice.

A large part of this study is motivated by exploring the underlying instructional dynamics of exercising voice publicly to a community and expressing critique that others see and engage with, keeping in mind that these instructional dynamics are influenced by the weight of the subject matter itself - race and racism. I turn to theories of informal learning to outline how everyday social media spaces serve as sites of learning, in ways both purposeful and unintentional. It is beyond the scope of this project to measure precisely *what* and *how much* youth on Tumblr are learning. Yet by laying the groundwork of how this space resonates with elements of informal learning, we can think of youth as active producers (and thus as teachers) through creating content, particularly as it exists as cultural and social commentary. One central argument I set forth about this space is that, while some moderators explicitly state an intention to teach through their blogging, all Tumblr users have the potential to unintentionally “teach” in that they all can post content and engage with other content in a way that is visible to others to read. Regardless of intent, their material may still have an influence on other young people’s understandings of race by existing in archives on Tumblr (Nakagawa & Arzubiaga 2014).

However, though I strive to take seriously Tumblr users’ social critiques, I also pay close attention to concerns about the *content* and *language* of these critiques, rather than blindly celebrating youth expression in itself (Buckingham 2008). Though it’s important to think about the possibilities for mobilization in these social critiques, it’s also important to remember that the subject matter - race - is such a highly charged topic, and the way people choose to discuss it vary based on their personal experiences and their belief in its continued salience.

I turn to theories on how race is conceptualized in public narratives in order to provide a comparison point for how race and racism is discussed on Tumblr. Ultimately, to understand the backlash against some of these ways of speaking, I turn to theories on policing and backlash to

understand the different ways people conceptualize the same activity and seek to monitor *if* and *how* these conversations should occur. Working with these theories provides some alternatives for how people of color might need to reject the mainstream public's concern over the way these conversations are articulated. These theories leave us thinking of the ways in which young people on Tumblr may simply stop caring about the backlash they receive, and may proceed speaking the way they see is most beneficial or compelling personally but with other Tumblr users in the same community.

Thinking of blogs as structured spaces with underlying instructional dynamics, similar to what Paromita Sengupta calls "social media classrooms," allows us to think critically about the type of space that is being constructed and the ways the dynamics they construct appeal to youth in comparison to traditional spaces in which subject matter on race is learned.

Online Critique as Voice and Activism

How have scholars theorized on the online activities people of color in particular are engaging with that respond to racial injustice? Bonilla and Rosa's (2015) study of racial politics on Twitter suggests that social media sites are unique spaces for people of color to challenge racial injustice, counter mainstream narratives, reimagine group identities, or simply share information on current events regarding race (6). Further, they argue that these creative online practices give an outlet for documenting and challenging experiences. This is incredibly important for people of color who otherwise are being misrepresented by media narratives, and who turn to online spaces instead as a tool to work against these narratives (8). Similarly, Craig Watkins' (2014) analysis of Twitter hashtags leads him to argue that social media practices on Twitter serve as a challenge to the mainstream, as "creative, critical, and communal responses" originating from youth to contest media narratives and redirect how public dialogues engaged

with race. While these are optimistic portrayals, what they fail to do is distinguish where the pushback comes from. Typically, we imagine damaging racial narratives as being perpetuated as part of a larger national discourse voiced in particular through the media. However, young people of color on Tumblr also choose to respond to other youth who are also actively participating in these narratives.

In thinking of where to begin with laying the theoretical groundwork for studying Tumblr, turning to the notion of participatory cultures lets us safely branch into other theories. Henry Jenkins et. al (2015) defines participatory cultures as:

“A culture with a relatively low barrier to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices...” (4). I would argue that all of these elements are present in blogging on Tumblr. Within a single blog, one can see how the presence of a “Submit” feature and the active solicitation of content encourages the community to participate in the growth of the blog through the direct contribution of content. Thinking broadly about Tumblr as a whole, the existence of loose communities of blogs that cross-reference other pages demonstrates an ease and support in sharing content. Regarding informal mentorship, one can see how there is almost an adaptation process in which young people new to Tumblr and interested in participating in the community are getting exposed to larger conversations through reading posts from the race-themed blogs they might follow, and seeing the common types of posts that occur, like posts that promote the donation pages of people of color who need emergency financial help, call-out posts that hold accountable specific Tumblr blogs for being anti-Black, or even tongue-in-cheek comments on white people’s actions that flip onto them stereotypes usually given to people of color.

The common trends in posts results in similar styles that users are participating collectively in perpetuating, even if doing so individually. In thinking about communities of shared practices, the authors link to the theory of situated learning, and argue that learning is “embedded in everyday life of communities” (5). The connection to situated learning provides a promising foundation to explore instructional dynamics of learning within communities, which will be addressed further on in the chapter.

In looking at different participatory cultures, della Porta & Mattoni (Delwiche & Henderson 2013) look specifically towards participation in the creation of alternative media outlets, noting that there is in them a degree of collectiveness and reclaiming of voice away from mainstream media narratives (176-77). The label of alternative media outlet may be an apt one, if we acknowledge that much of what occurs in race-themed blogs is a critique of dominant racial narratives, but also disseminating alternative narratives. Thinking of Tumblr as a participatory culture, and as an alternative media outlet in many ways, we can proceed to consider linkages to theories on activism that would allow us to theorize on the extent to which these practices take on the element of civic engagement within participatory cultures.

If we consider individual participation in alternative mediums as a spectrum, then we should understand that individuals on Tumblr are participating in the creation of alternative texts in this outlet, both as “activists and non-activists” (176-177). The authors specifically note that blogging online allows “the individual [to] engage in the production of ‘challenging codes’ (Melucci 1996) that oppose the dominant system of meanings... [and] easily accessed.” (177). Further, “the alternative media text may become part of discussions in the general public sphere and hence gain a certain degree of collectiveness... part of a collective debate - even if conceived and written alone” (177). The idea that individually-made critiques can take a potentially

collective form within an alternative media outlets allows us to branch into theories that directly deal with civic engagement and activist practices and see how they apply within Tumblr.

Benjamin Stokes points out the new challenges in studying civic engagement, because what counts as civic engagement is now encompassing more and more activities (Delwiche & Henderson 2013: 143). Returning to della Porta & Mattoni, they look at activist media practices within cultures of participation, noting that “the creation of alternative media outlets are deeply linked to the social movement milieu” (176).

I would go a step further to argue that race-themed blogs take part in not only a participatory culture, but in participatory *politics*, defined as “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern” (Cohen & Kahne 2012: VI). Specifically, it is *not* guided by what Cohen and Kahne (VI) call a “deference to elites or formal institutions,” in that it is often mocking of dominant groups and institutions. What is important in participatory politics among youth is that it blends together popular culture and popular politics, breaking down the boundaries of what we consider traditional ways of engaging in politics and social issues (Cohen 2012). The MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics provides a definition of the way youth serve as political actors, and studies the developmental pathways that lead to engagement. In considering activities in which youth are politically active, and through which voice and influence are exerted, five elements were identified as defining characteristics of participatory politics.

- **“Investigation** - Members of a community collect, and analyze online information from multiple sources, and often provide a check on information circulated by traditional media outlets.”
- **“Dialogue and feedback** - Commenting on blogs, or providing feedback to political leaders through other digital means is increasingly how young people are joining public dialogues and making their voices heard around civic and political issues.”

- “**Circulation** - In participatory politics, the flow of information is shaped by many in the broader community rather than by a small group of elites.”
- “**Production** - In addition to circulating information young people increasingly create original online digital content around issues of public concern that potentially reach broader audiences.”
- “**Mobilization** - Members of a community mobilize others often through online networks to help accomplish civic or political goals.”

As we explore later on, we will see specific themes - the open circulation of information, facilitation of dialogue, production of original public content, and specific joint actions - are present in the race-themed blog communities on Tumblr. The presence of these elements lay the groundwork for us to move away from arguments that online activities are slactivist. Cohen & Kahne argue that it is not an either/or of online versus offline activity, where one is more legitimate than the other. In fact, she raises what I see to be a critical element of practices in Tumblr - the potential for individual growth towards the *building* of collective identities through social exchange, which can then “be mobilized for civic and political engagement” (Cohen & Kahne: ix). Similarly, Paromita Sengupta (2015) argues that, by making the political personal, these spaces can be seen as “virtual classrooms for potential political activists” (II). In this way, we return to the idea of the spectrum of participation, where youth interact in different ways with this alternative media platform, and thus are potentially influenced in varying ways.

Measuring the Potential for Collective Action

Having covered how individual practices can be understood as forms of civic engagement according to literature in the field, how do activities on Tumblr compare to what might be considered the opposite of slactivism and a progression from individually made critiques - social movements? On first inspection, Tumblr lacks the organizational form and consciously sustained effort expected in a social movement (Goodwin & Jasper 2009: 3). However, on a theoretical

level, there are similarities that would support the claims that social media sites have the potential to facilitate further forms of engagement, particularly when we think about political consciousness as a critical element of social movements towards change.

Fundamentally, social movements are the “clustering of certain critiques performed together” (Johnston 2009: 9). Further, James Jasper (2014: 9) argues that what is key to social movements is the attempt to create new meanings and ways of making sense of the social world. However, people *do not* always feel compelled to wait until an established social movement allows them to work towards change or protest (Jasper 2014: XVI). Therefore, it is important to look at how individual protests clustered together supports collective action because of the similarity in beliefs being expressed, even if it is not organized.

William Gamson’s (1992) theory of collective action assesses how ordinary online conversations support the development of a political consciousness that may help move critique towards collective action. In brief, Gamson identifies three components that support developing a collective action frame, defined here as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings” (Snow & Benford 1992 as quoted in Gamson 1992: 7). The first component is perhaps the most important: injustice, or a moral and emotional cognition of actors that are causing harm, as well as a sense that it is a shared injustice (7, 31). The second element is agency, or the empowerment of people in recognizing that they can alter social conditions, which are not static but are open to change (7). Finally, Gamson identifies identity as important because it shows a recognition of a “we” and of an adversary with differing values (7). This adversarial target could also be a cultural one - Gamson gives the example of a dominant cultural code as being in opposition against the in-group (85). In the interaction of these components, Gamson argues that there may be a common meaning developed collaboratively that supports the development of a collective action frame

around a social issue (111). By using Gamson's methodology, I work to theorize on how common critiques reveal a consciousness needed to move into a recognition of and action against racial injustice by looking at the prevalence of these themes on Tumblr.

Informal Learning & Teaching

The theory that these spaces may be serving as spaces of development for political actors leads to the question of how we might begin to measure a possibility for growth towards action. However, as blogs will often list teaching or educating as an explicit goal, I look also into the idea that these spaces facilitate growth as teaching spaces or perhaps as virtual classrooms. How is race and racism being taught to others through the sharing and production of online content in these spaces, and in what ways may this content and language be more appealing compared to the ways race is traditionally taught? In this section, I briefly review the literature that grounds my argument regarding the learning processes occurring through these blogs.

Fundamental to understanding the importance of studying online practices is the perception of young people as citizens *now*, not solely as citizens-in-development (Ito et. al 2008). As such, a central theme to this study is acknowledging the value of studying the varied sites in which youth are developing their own sense of identity, politics, and culture, traits Henry Giroux argues are developed largely outside of formal institutions like school (Singh & Doyle 2006: 56). Seeing as online social spaces constitute a large part of young people's day-to-day, studying them may be fundamental to grasping how youth develop their notions of how to understand and speak on race, which carry through the online and offline worlds. This is important too even outside of the question of their effectiveness as sites of mobilization towards change.

Neil Selwyn (2007) urges scholars to recognize that many of the online activities youth engage in may in fact be informal learning processes (2). Further, Selwyn concludes that *all* social network platforms have the possibility of being “fertile sites for informal learning” (3). Though there is no firm consensus on a definition, informal learning is understood to be the youth-led, collaborative and exploratory activities taking place outside of formal educational institutions, and occurring as a spectrum rather than a rigidly-set structure (Buckingham 2008: 13). Importantly, David Buckingham (2008) argues that internet-savvy youth not only participate in playful learning, but also are more inclined to engage in critical thinking and to challenge the status quo (16). These three elements - playfulness, inclination towards critical thinking, and challenges to the status quo are of course thematic elements that arise throughout this study.

An important question to address is that of *intent* to teach. “A wide variety of media messages can act as teachers of values, ideologies, beliefs, and provide images for interpreting the world, whether or not the designers are conscious of this intent” (Gamson 1992: 24). Gamson’s statement asks us to think about the role of Tumblr users as taking on a teaching role when they either post content on race and racism, or when they create structured spaces to facilitate discussions on race. Indeed, many blogs may explicitly state a teaching or educational purpose towards maintaining a page themed on race or racism, and provide specific links, answer questions, and set up specific pages for users who come to their blogs. While other content producers may not have explicitly stated a teaching goal or intent, it follows the literature that their material may still have an influence on other young people’s understandings of race (Nakagawa & Arzubiaga 2014). (Recall the earlier connection to the theory of situated learning within participatory cultures).

What are the ideas about race that youth are voicing, circulating, and consuming on online platforms? Why are these spaces and strategies of talking about and at times teaching race and racism created and visited when other avenues for holding conversations exist, like schools? Answering these questions requires looking at what may be the deficiencies in how race and racism is traditionally articulated that requires the creation of an alternative space for exploring it. By looking at racial discourses in the mainstream and the resistance against these discourses, I hope to begin to look at the appeal of producing content that may appear controversial to some, and to begin to parse out two questions: appealing *to whom* and controversial *to whom*?

Racial Discourses: Voicing Critique and Offering Alternatives

Though I stress the importance of valuing youth spaces and practices, there is significant controversy about the way some young people of color are engaging with race online through Tumblr. In fact, this controversy largely comes from other young people, who claim that their peers who engage with social justice issues online often do so in ways that are inappropriate, overly emotional, and generally ineffective. There appears to be a disconnect between the academic evaluation and the lived experience of youth, leading to a tension in this promising scholarly assessment when situated alongside the heavy critique Tumblr garners from other youth. Therefore, I echo Dana Byrne's (2008) call for studying the racial discourses informally learned in youth online spaces, in order to grasp what youth choose to share and are thus exposed to (31).

What are the mainstream racial discourses that youth are speaking out against? In order to understand public discourses on race in the US, I employ Amy Ansell and James Statman's (1999) theories on a discursive ecology of whiteness. In this study, the authors lay out the narratives that Euro-Americans resort to in talking about race, particularly in the context of the

post-civil rights era. These theories shed light to begin to categorize how public conversations are carried out. Though this research looks at how people of color discuss race, we need to also consider what white people consider to be the meaning and legacy of race in their lives. Doing so helps us conceptualize what these bloggers are potentially responding to in terms of larger discourses and begin to sketch out why many react poorly to conversations on Tumblr.

The first attitude Ansell & Statman (1999) define is one of explicit racism, something that is perhaps less anticipated today as taking place in direct, face-to-face exchanges. The second approach is referred to as the “I Never Owned Slaves” attitude, in which whites consider racism and the legacies of slavery to be a thing of the past, particularly if they themselves do not act blatantly racist (159). Of course, what this attitude does is deny the structural significance of race and the nation’s collective responsibility in creating meaning in a racialized system and perpetuating it. This attitude is commonly seen in online exchanges, where debates about race and racism are significantly hampered by many whites’ refusal to perceive that there is a problem. The logical conclusion to this line of thinking is that whites are the new victims, and minorities the recipients of new and unfair advantages (161). Without a critically bifocal perspective, this type of thinking becomes easy to adopt, as it disassociates any “advantages” awarded to minorities today from the historical disadvantages that must be remedied (Weis & Fine 2012).

Ansell & Statman also write about the progressive mainstream that may perceive their role in race relations to be to ignore race altogether, and to treat all equally. The flaw of this colorblind approach is again in relying on an individualized understanding of how race works, and failing to see the material consequences of sustained structural racism.

Thus, in the context of pervasive and damaging racial narratives in the US, understanding the way mainstream racial discourses are deployed might provide fertile ground to theorize on how youth turn to and even *develop* alternative spaces and discourses. It is when this pushback is situated in the playful and experimental environment of an online platform like Tumblr that additional room for controversy arises, as youth adapt for themselves how they want to counteract these narratives.

The concern about how we should engage with social issues relates to an argument Suey Park & David Leonard (2014) make on what white people consider appropriate or inappropriate ways of speaking online. Park & Leonard's study outlines the backlash against the ways women of color use Twitter to speak out on the intersections of feminism and race. The article discusses how white feminists feel afraid and threatened when engaging with feminists of color on issues of race. "Women of color... are reprimanded for using available platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr to write their own stories" (Park & Leonard 2014). Park & Leonard's comment bridges two activities that prove to be integral: a controversial style of speaking that is being policed, and the desire to share stories. Further in this research, we will see how much of online conversations on race are in fact centered around telling stories to bring to light what has been ignored and to legitimize what has been denied.

A potential avenue for understanding the appeal of controversial language and the disdain towards it is to turn to George Sefa Dei et. al's (2004) study on anti-racist work and mainstream opposition. The authors suggest that any effort made by people of color in speaking against racism will be met with policing and social backlash, and dismissed as being "emotional and self-serving" (4, 9). The authors argue that, because speaking on racism is inherently oppositional to the mainstream, "we [people of color] need to establish politics and strategies of

our own and implement them in spaces and places of our choosing” (9). This interpretation suggests that perhaps highly charged language is a direct challenge and a purposeful denial of mainstream frameworks of thinking. And perhaps the dismissal of Tumblr as being not a valid space to talk social justice is irrelevant to the concerns of people of color. As Sefa Dei et. al suggest, progress is not possible if the oppressed continue to concern themselves with the rules of frameworks designed to benefit whiteness (8). This is because the mainstream will always police, deride, and silence anti-racist work in order to protect the status quo.

However, a potential consequence of this interpretation is that it might romanticize what youth are *actually* doing when speaking controversially (Buckingham 2008). Regardless of whether or not the content is problematic or misguided, it’s still very necessary to understand how young people are negotiating with these concepts (Byrne 2008). Even seeing the ways in which youth responses might *overcorrect* in providing alternative spaces and narratives still might reveal something about the weaknesses of the current racial discourses and the spaces currently available to engage with those discourses.

METHODOLOGY

To tackle the questions guiding this study, any conclusions must be grounded in the content itself that is produced and shared on Tumblr, as well as Tumblr users' interpretations of their activities. By looking at both, we can begin to theorize on what is occurring in this site on the groundwork provided by the theoretical frameworks of scholars reviewed earlier.

Although I hypothesize that the individual activities on Tumblr can be understood as stemming from a collective *spirit* of critique, these practices lack the shape and structure that defines how scholars traditionally study social movements. Hank Johnston (2009: 9) writes that "social movements become phenomena of study because they represent a clustering of certain critiques imparting to them a broader collective scope than those which, otherwise, are simply everywhere." While perhaps unconventional in form, I argue that the social critiques articulated on Tumblr share this essential characteristic with social movements; therefore, looking towards the methodologies used to study traditional social movements is a promising avenue to theorize about occurring in this space.

In order to study this potential collective spirit, I turn to Hank Johnston's (2009) discussion on how to study *culture* in social movement research. Johnston argues that culture in itself is not a variable that can be studied; however, he provides a way of categorizing culture into distinct factors to begin to study its influence on people and practices (6). He identifies these three categories as ideations, artifacts, and performances, thus providing us a framework with which to understand a motivating spirit that drives collective social critiques. Ideations refer to values and beliefs, artifacts to cultural objects like art or music, and performances are symbolic actions where we enact culture (7). However, because of the nature of this online space, we must understand that the artifact and the performance are one and the same. We can look to the artifact

as a social performance because the producer of the artifact has the audience in mind when they produce a permanent object (7). Particularly for blogs that are run for a specific community, the performance becomes important as it sets the tone of how they anticipate the community will see them and how they can and should or shouldn't get involved.

Johnston (2009) outlines several recommendations for how to study a clustering of social critiques in a social movement, beginning with the assertion that scholarship needs to be grounded in deep and detailed descriptions of what is actually going on before attempting to explain why something is happening (2009: 25). Tumblr is a very new site in terms of academic exploration, and the ways youth use Tumblr are constantly evolving, so it is vital to ground this study first with the goal of providing rich description of how policies exist in this point in time. This involves articulating in detail any existing organizational forms, what strategies are employed to make claims, how actors face opposition, and ultimately how protest is performed (Johnston 2009: 26). Again, we must consider these practices as a part of and reflection of offline dynamics, so the manner of expressing critique and the critique itself reveal outside racial tensions.

Johnston's (2009) recommendations guide my method of understanding what sorts of values, beliefs, and frames bloggers adhere to when they post on race and racism, and how they choose to perform these frames socially. My approach is divided into three interrelated yet distinct parts – first, selecting two race-themed blogs to do a detailed description of their original content, strategies, and organizational forms; second, grounding my interpretations with two in-depth semi-structured interviews with young people ages eighteen to mid-twenties who moderate for separate but similar race-themed blogs, and finally, examining the content reblogged on these two blogs and examining patterns in how users are using the site to talk about race. This

approach attempts to preserve the variety of interpretations coming from the youth themselves while using scholarship to interpret these practices.

Selecting & Analyzing Race-Themed Blogs

What are some limitations of using a few highly organized blogs to talk about a larger collection of activities on Tumblr? One criticism of this approach may be that theorizing based on these race-themed blogs alone may be a too-selective sample of especially active young people and neglects the many users who post about race yet don't take the step toward creating formal blogs to publicly speak on it. Though the creators of these blogs may seem exceptional in comparison to other youth who have not created structured spaces, these blogs are *dependent* on content originating from all of the "ordinary" young people on Tumblr who are posting in a way that resonates with one another, even if it is in a less dedicated manner. As I argue further on, examining these blogs gives us insight on how blogging facilitates conversation and potentially facilitates individual growth as well.

There are 260 million blogs on Tumblr as of October 2015. Therefore, to begin to search for an initial list of blogs to research, I started with one blog that I had previously done research on and that I knew met the criteria of being highly active and race-themed, having also conducted interviews with two moderators from that page (Uruchima 2015). This blog provided a list of about 80 blogs they identified as being similar to theirs in having content focused on race. From this initial list, I eliminated blogs that were run by companies or formal organizations, as I am only interested in blogs that are run specifically by youth in their teens and mid-twenties. I also removed blogs that were run by young people who appeared to be professionals running blogs as a type of business. I did this because I am interested in studying voluntary, interest-driven blogging as an everyday activity, not as a responsibility with formal benefits. Other

criteria included estimating that at least half or more of the content was oriented around the topic of race or ethnicity, in order to eliminate blogs that were more journal or diary-like. A quick way of identifying this was to look at what I loosely understood as the presence of “voice,” or text speaking *to* the public as an audience that it purposefully seeks to interact with. This is in contrast to blogs that lacked text acknowledging an audience. Ultimately, this left me with just over fifty blogs.

With this list, I began the first round of data collection by creating an Excel-sheet with the following categories to organize data from the fifty blogs:

- Blog Names
- Additional Pages
- Strength of Voice
- Posted Recently?
- Posts Often?
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) (and roughly what topics the FAQ answered)
- Explicit Goal (direct quote when possible)
- Moderators
- “Controversial” Text Example
- Links to Other Blogs?
- Mentions Education or Teaching?

With this Excel sheet, I was able to generate tables to get a broad overview of some of the common practices and patterns in these race-themed blogs (see Appendix A). Initially, I had hoped to group blogs by blog type. However, I realized that there was a lot of crossover between blog function and goals, where I wasn’t able to cleanly separate blogs into categories without

obscuring important similarities or differences. Therefore, I decided to make a general distinction in blog type in roughly separating them by levels of controversial diction and imagery as opposed to a more neutral approach. I defined “controversial” as having text on their homepages with controversial undertones (curses, curtness, strong emotions, calling-out white people), and blogs whose home pages were more neutral in tone, and sounded closest to a tone one would find in a textbook (lack of emotion, no mocking attitude, seeming “objectivity”). Making some distinction was necessary because I wanted to be able to get insight from differences in approaches to blogging on race.

To select one blog from each category, I narrowed options down by choosing a blog with a stronger “public voice,” and selecting one that posted often and recently. With these two blogs, I began to pull from each a collection of text that was written by that blog, or explicitly placed in the organizational structure of that blog, on each page (See Appendix B and Appendix C for screenshots of these homepages). This included looking at FAQ pages, About Me/About the Moderators sections, sidebar descriptions, links to further information, and answered questions, but this part did *not* include content that was simply reblogged by that blog. This is because the pages of each blog are usually fairly permanent, and particularly so in comparison the front pages of the blog’s feed, which changes constantly with each new post reblogged. I also wrote analytic memos describing the layout of the blogs – what pages were available, what images they used, what visually was stressed. In doing so, I made sure that each blog complied to the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections’ (2013) recommendations that activities available online to any users without specific authorization should be considered public behavior.

Considering that one claim I was interested in was the possibility that there is a type of collective action occurring on Tumblr in how young people use it to engage with race, I grounded my investigation in William Gamson's (1992) theories on the beliefs that help facilitate a mindset oriented towards participation in social movements. According to Gamson, the three critical components of a collective action frame are, first, an emotional (not purely intellectual) sense of injustice; second, agency as the consciousness that one can change the social situation; and third, identity, or the identification of an in-group and the opposition. Therefore, in looking at the text, I worked to identify whether and how injustice, agency, and identity were expressed in how young people discussed issues on race.

Having both in-depth data as well as generalized data on over 50 blogs is a deliberate choice to make the switch between experiencing the smaller details that make Tumblr blogs so distinctive, and understanding general trends in these blogs that are revealed through the data.

Interviewing Bloggers

In addition to looking at the blogs, I also grounded my research in interviews with bloggers who ran race-themed blogs, using different blogs than those I selected for close analysis. Using the list of blogs I compiled, I reached out to about 25 bloggers, selecting from this list only bloggers who identified as over 18. In reaching out to potential participants, I used Tumblr's Submit feature to send a brief invitation to bloggers; when possible I emailed directly bloggers who provided emails. If bloggers linked to their other Tumblr profiles, I also messaged them through those profiles as well, in order to raise my chance of having them view my message, as the more popular race-themed blogs get hundreds of submissions. In my invitation to participate, I provided my email, as well as requesting theirs to facilitate easier contact, as Tumblr's Submit feature limits how many characters you may send in one message.

The purpose of interviewing was to make the connection between what *I* interpret is being performed through the brief but extensive text artifacts on Tumblr, and what are the moderators' perspectives on their own participation in race-themed blogs. One thing to consider is that there is not always a stable connection between what people claim in interviews, and what they do in practice, so in selecting the methods to pursue my questions, I did not rely solely on what was said by participants, nor on what I interpreted as happening in the online realm (Silverman 2001: 29).

Ultimately I interviewed two participants from each category of blog type I identified earlier. The interviews were conducted on Skype for approximately one hour each. The interviews were semi-structured, with questions I prepared to guide the conversations on the themes I wanted to cover, but also allowing for flexibility in respondents finding one topic more compelling. Broadly, the themes of my questions were on discussing what they wanted to say about race (ideations), understanding and assessing the strategies used to speak on race (the performance), whether or not there was a sense of community with others who talked about race (is this a collective action), and assessing the value or importance of engaging with race on Tumblr (potential implications).

I began by asking a simple descriptive question – “Can you tell me about your blog?” With this question, I hoped to get a general overview of their attitudes towards their blog and their practices. Asking this question first allowed me to get an overview of the themes that would emerge organically as most important to the moderator without the heavy influence that the direction and wording of my questions would take in biasing their answers. I then asked why they began using Tumblr to blog about race, and why they continued to do so.

I then followed by asking the moderator what types of content about race they shared or posted. In asking this succinct question, I anticipated that what they emphasized or didn't include might reveal something about whether there was a guiding framework or understanding on race that they wanted to promote by talking about race on Tumblr. In this way, I wanted to see if the element of social critique was something that they identified as important to their online activities. Because many voices that deal with race on Tumblr do so in ways that are controversial in using terminology that is emotional and not neutral, I wanted to see how Tumblr bloggers assessed the value of speaking in this way. Therefore, I asked them what they thought about the common critique expressed by their peers about the *way* many bloggers speak about race in a way that is too personal, controversial, and emotional. Asking about the controversy behind certain types of dialogues on race would reveal further if bloggers understood the backlash in terms of respectability politics or tone policing for instance. An important connecting question was asking about the educational merit of both posting about race, and reading content about race on Tumblr. Because I hypothesize that engaging on Tumblr has a central educational benefit, this question was critical to understanding whether my hunches were supported by the bloggers' experiences and intentions.

In order to pursue the question of whether similar activities on Tumblr are collective, I asked users whether they believed there was a community of users who posted about race, and if so, whether the sense of community was an important aspect of using Tumblr to talk about race. Finally, I asked whether they believed what they and others were doing on Tumblr. Though my study is guided by theories referring specifically to social movements, I left this question for last so that the implications of these terms didn't color the way the previous questions were answered. If they answered affirmatively, I asked them what they thought about the argument

that online activist practices were less legitimate than those that occur offline. Before ending the conclusion, I asked the participant if there was something else they thought I should understand that we hadn't covered.

In analyzing this data, I looked for themes based around my question of what was being said on race, how, and the importance or implications of this activity. As with working through the blog text, I also paid particular attention towards emotions and values, so that I could test against Gamson's (1992) collective action framework of agency, injustice, and identity. Doing so allowed me to take into account the fact that it is hard to conceptualize one's role in society while being in the midst of a historical moment, and allowed me to be more critical with how to contextualize bloggers' words and actions in wider dialogues that they may or may not be consciously identifying with.

Analyzing Content in Posts

The last part of my research involved looking at the content that blogs repost. I used content from the two blogs I closely analyzed earlier in my research. The reason I analyzed blog content separate from the blog structured pages was because the majority of what bloggers do is reblog *other* content. While individual frames informed the way bloggers shaped their blogs, it is inaccurate to analyze *all* content on these blogs as artifacts influenced by the blogger's personal frames. However, unless stated otherwise, it can be safely assumed that reblogging signals a general agreement with the content, so we are able to surmise that there is an alignment of frames, but we cannot assume that the frames are necessarily the same between original creator and the person who reblogged it. Further, it would be impractical to trace each post back to its author and attempt to reconstruct hundreds of personal frames that influence why each author posts on race, and how they choose to do so.

In order to get an effective snapshot of what a blog has posted, I created a Tumblr account and used it to reblog the first 20 posts on each blog, three times across the course of a week for a total of sixty posts from each blog. The purpose of creating a Tumblr blog to reblog their posts was so that the posts would be preserved on my account, and I could reblog only what was race-themed (Connelly 2015).

To organize the posts, I wrote a short phrase description of what the post was about, working to generate thematic umbrella terms for common types of posts. Ultimately, in establishing patterns through each approach, it was possible to assess the validity of Johnston's (2009: 25, 9) claims, that if "enough people share similarities in their frame, the action will appear to be coordinated," and further that "by performing them together, members come to see themselves as part of a movement." It's with the data available on this platform that we then can contextualize what is occurring in this site with academic discourses on conceptualizing race and racism, and contextualizing it in the contemporary public discourses around racism and injustice that is prevalent today.

CHAPTER 1: BLOGS AS AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES

There are a wide range of ways that youth speak and act on common issues through Tumblr; though this rich variety of activity deserves attention, I necessarily limit my analysis to that which will guide us to understand our main questions on the interplay between instruction, critique, and civic engagement. In this chapter, I begin to theorize based on the data provided from 2 case study blogs, focusing on these case studies to get a sense of the aesthetic experience of getting acquainted with the personality of each blog. I pull from this and the sample of 50 race themed blogs to sketch out three main blog goals - creating safe spaces, sharing stories/experiences, and educating. In this chapter I focus on the first two to branch into a discussion on whiteness in general. In later chapters I focus on the educational goal of blogging.

To return briefly to the literature before delving into the data on blog pages, Cohen & Kahne (2012) argue that online spaces can facilitate the building of collective identities that may be mobilized for civic and political engagement (ix). Our question then arises from the intersection of this notion and Paromita Sengupta's (2015) observation that we may be able to coin certain spaces as "virtual classrooms for potential political activists" (II). Although we can build a theory from the data on how these virtual classrooms function, we do not have data that reveals the level of Tumblr users' civic and political engagement. Again, to work through this, I also employ Gamson's (1992) theory on collective action-oriented frames to identify the presence of three elements for mobilization and political consciousness (identity, injustice, and agency). Doing so lets us see how conversations on Tumblr align with theoretical models on the development of political consciousness.

However, this study was largely inspired by the personality of Tumblr's blogs - the humor, emotions, and distinctive word choices that make for a complete experience for readers,

one that often strikes an odd balance of playfulness and almost business-like regulation. Therefore, other questions that arise from this aspect of Tumblr in particular are questions of controversial language and *how* youth choose to frame their pushback against mainstream racial narratives. Because of the importance on Tumblr of language choice and blog stylistic decisions in general, it's important for this analysis to not only build theories from generalization made with data collected from 50 blogs, but also to take seriously the effort put into creating the actual aesthetic experience of looking at these blogs. To accomplish this, I focus on two blogs as case studies. Though they are not meant to be representative of the dozens of race-themed blogs on Tumblr, it's doubtful that *any* blogs could be representative of a spectrum composed of difference and contradiction in how they approach race conversations. Understanding these two blogs as valuable spaces of interpretation outside of their ability to be wholly representative allows the reader to have a more fulfilling experience in grappling with spaces that are not in the least bit static - blogs whose practices are influenced by other race-themed blogs, by their authors, and by society's changing social, political, and racial landscape that provides the fuel to their content.

The way we can find solid ground for beginning to compare and contrast blogging styles effective comparison is by looking at the actual organizational layouts of the blogs - the page types and those pages' content. Therefore, in this study I use blog pages as firm guiding posts to direct an exploration of the less certain - variability in blog purposes, content, language, instructional dynamics, among other things.

The case studies I selected provide roughly two different experiences in terms of organizational features - "This is not Pilipinx" (TINP) represents blogs with more simplified layouts, with fewer pages and not much diversity in page functions beyond the most common

types (See Appendix A). In contrast, “Angry Women of Color United” (AWOC) is representative of blogs that branch off from the essential functions to feature more distinctive and personalized page types and functions. What also distinguishes TINP from AWOC is that the latter uses more overtly controversial language, something I illustrate in more detail later in the chapter.

Alongside the analysis of these case studies, I draw from in-depth interviews with moderators of two popular race-themed blogs. The first moderator, under the pseudonym Angela, is a moderator on a blog focused on issues in the Asian-American community, started in 2012 by a different person who noticed an absence on Tumblr of conversations on issues facing this community, and who wanted to take action to correct that. Angela is in her early twenties, and for the past five or six years, uses Tumblr nearly daily.

The second narrative I turn to is that of Melody, who wished to be identified as moderator of the blog “We Are All Mixed Up.” Melody is in her early twenties and identifies as Chinese and Iranian. This identity fueled her desire to join a blog that focuses on providing a safe space for the experiences of mixed-race and multi-ethnic people that she noted were less discussed in the anti-racism movement. She has been a moderator for four years. With these interviews, I work to incorporate what can’t be pulled from the general data - the affective experience of blogging, and how bloggers frame their own activities as moderators within a larger community. These interviews will be interspersed throughout the following chapters to provide further insight to what is written on Tumblr, and provides a counterbalance to how I read content (See Appendix B for images from AWOC’s pages, and Appendix C for images from TINP). In the final chapter, I look closely at these narratives to provide a more historical look at

the things that are occurring across Tumblr and trends in the way Tumblr has changed, based on the longevity of the moderators' time involved in these communities.

Controversy and Diversity in Blog Goals

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



A safe space for women of color. Our bodies are not land for colonialism. We're not going to perpetuate sexual stereotypes created by racist pornography. We're not uncivilized, hypersexualized, exotic women. Our voices WILL be heard and we WILL fight back. Contact: angrywocunited@gmail.com 1 Online User



Upon opening the front page of Angry Women of Color United, the first thing that draws attention are a few flashing icons on the sidebar, placed along with the more typical blog photo and description, and the sidebar links to additional pages. “This journal is QUEER POSITIVE,” flashes one icon; “This journal is BODY POSITIVE,” and “This journal is TRANSGENDER POSITIVE” flash the others. Above these icons is a blanked out Facebook-esque photo that reads “My profile picture just disappeared in solidarity with all indigenous women missing, murdered, and denied.” Below this, I read the following blog description:

“A safe space for women of color. Our bodies are not land for colonialism. We're not going to perpetuate sexual stereotypes created by racist pornography. We're not uncivilized, hypersexualized, exotic women. Our voices WILL be heard and we WILL fight back. Contact: angrywocunited@gmail.com.”

What is apparent from the front page of this blog is the intersectional focus seen in their deliberate engagement across issues. The inclusion of the disappeared indigenous women graphic and the gender and sexuality graphics show a deliberate orientation by the moderators in defining the terms of what they call a “safe space” towards positively supporting these social locations. The blog goal that makes a connection between the body and colonialism reveals an intersectionality that is common to blogs on Tumblr. While I focus on how blogs speak to the experiences of being a person of color, many blogs are also explicit in bringing in issues as they intersect with race, or issues that arise from their own lived experiences. This can be for instance gender, disability, or sexuality, and posts on these topics are often interspersed among posts on race and ethnicity.

Melody eloquently summarizes the way she interprets how Tumblr users work cross-issue, so I leave the topic open for further study with her take on the issue.

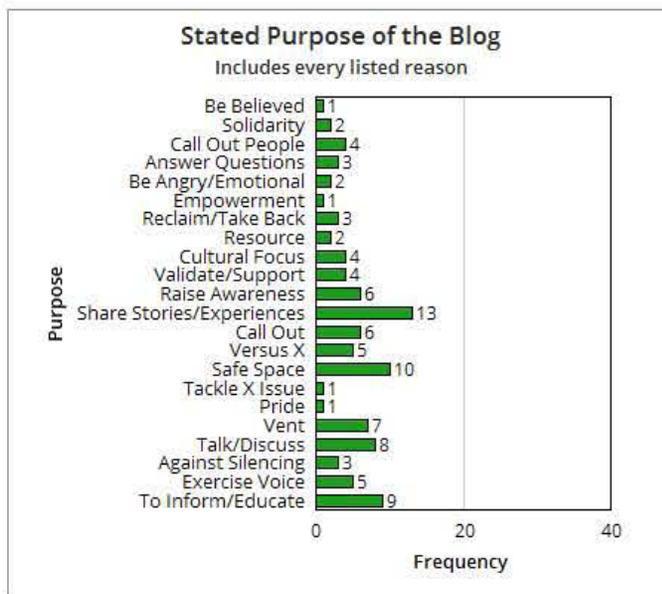
“...It’s not just awareness about race. Tumblr kind of becomes a holistic approach in thinking about ability and disability, gender and sexuality, class, capitalism... I never see people just thinking about race by itself, which is something you see a lot in academia, in erasing gender, or only race being interrogated. I see people understanding what [Kimberlé] Crenshaw talks about in intersectionality, and talking about the ways structures interlock with each other.”

Beyond intersectionality, this blog goal also reveals a direct critique of a specific narrative, identified here as the perpetuation of the image of hypersexualized and exotified women. Importantly, the blog moves past simply critique and names a direct action, that of *fighting back*, of demanding to be heard. In a few lines, we can see the beginnings of a demonstrated desire or acknowledgement of a need for change, here along the lines of race, gender, and sexuality simultaneously. Beyond acknowledging the problem, the moderators

identify their point of action for change as exercising voice. In this we see elements of Gamson’s theories on identity (“we”), injustice (“racist,” “hypersexualized,” “stereotyped,”), and agency (“we will fight back”). These themes of identifying an in-group, identifying a problem in narratives or treatment of people of color, and identifying an action (“taking back our culture,” “calling out racism,” etc) are common in the 50 blogs I analyzed, and set us up to understand the possibility of an action-oriented framework and the development of collective identities.

Consider our next case study - This is not Pilipinx (See Appendix C). This blog has a less exhaustive description: “TINP is against fetishization, racism, and cultural appropriation of

Pilipinx people and cultures.” This description is an example of a more straightforward message, where the moderators name several issues they hope to tackle. Appropriation and fetishization are particularly common topics in the data I collected. The graph shows the count on directly quoted phrases from the descriptions on the front pages of over 50 blogs. Much like in AWOC, many of these



blogs have multiple goals that defy the instinct to try to easily categorize blogs as distinct from one another. However, what is apparent is that there are patterns in the blog goals that provide further groundwork for an argument about the potentially collective aspect within blogging, and further, the desire to make some change, either in narratives or practices.

Taking into account the overlaps in blog goals, I identified three blog purposes that are most common: sharing stories and experiences, providing a safe space, and informing/educating. These categories serve as the foundation for how I theorize on common themes in the purposes of race-themed blogs. The high count on the instructional/educational theme confirmed my initial hypothesis about what was occurring on Tumblr, and I will return to it at length in a later chapter. However, what I didn't anticipate was how often the notion of safe space came up in blog goals. Though my focus is on an educational lens, ignoring the way many bloggers frame their actions as in part being the construction of safe spaces would be to erase the value of their own interpretations. Therefore, incorporating questions about safe spaces necessarily became a key part of my study. What elements create a safe space? Safe space against what, and to facilitate what purpose?

In the next section, I begin by looking at the idea of the "safe space" as it exists on Tumblr, using it to launch into a larger discussion on whiteness and how it shapes the way these blogs are structured and run. Ultimately, I am looking at three blog goals: creating safe spaces, sharing stories, and educating/informing. I theorize on safe spaces and sharing stories together in this chapter, and pay particular attention to educating/informing in the following chapter.

Whiteness, White People and White Tears: Shaping the Borders of Safe Spaces

I asked Melody, whose blog identifies the goal of creating a safe space, to talk about what the concept meant within her blog. "Anybody who comes there can talk about their feelings without being ridiculed or ostracized... We can have inter-community critical discussions and understand that it's not a vendetta, it's just people who talk about privilege. We're not trying to hurt them."

Several important themes came up in her description of a safe space. First, that she began by talking about feelings and the protection of the ability to voice those feelings without punishment. The importance of the emotional component comes up in a number of other blog goals - “be angry and emotional,” “validate and support,” for instance. In traditional instructional environments, feelings are not usually considered to be valid in the classroom. Hard facts and data are traditionally seen as much more legitimate in the construction of knowledge because of their presumptive objectivity. Yet, returning briefly to Gamson, we are provided with a key connection that may help illuminate how to interpret this. In identifying the possibility of a collective-action frame, he notes that injustice is perceived as a moral and *emotional* realization, what he calls a “hot cognition.” In fact, we could argue that an attempt at neutrality in talking about race and racism is a leftover of an antiquated way of viewing knowledge production that values objectivity, which in fact only serves to obscure the importance of positionality. Therefore, in thinking about a space in which theories on race and racism are grappled with, and by nature, themes of injustice and oppression, a lack of emotion may not be something we should attempt to aspire to achieve even in an instructional environment. I argue this is because race and racism on these blogs are not solely tackled in the abstract as theory but as a lived experience, and in telling these experiences through storytelling, recounting injustice likely takes on an emotional tone for many.

The second theme that we can pull from Melody’s interpretation is that of a community, and also the idea of a “them.” Not only does she identify a “we” and a “they,” but she also *places them in opposition to each other*, in that “they” take offense to “our” conversation. This is not a dichotomy named only in Melody’s blog. The oppositional notion, what Gamson calls an adversarial component of identity, is fundamental to many of the blogs I analyzed. “We don’t

belong to your fetishization,” “if we see you appropriating our culture...,” “Africa is not a fucking place for you to find yourself.” What these blog descriptions articulate is that there are active adversaries who are not only fetishizing and appropriating, but also deriding these blogs’ conversations *on* fetishization and appropriation as being perhaps personal attacks. In Angela’s blog, she identifies a similar oppositional dynamic, where the moderators strive to create a space to be angry without having to “take into account the feelings of people who are otherwise in a dominant position.” While we can read those people in dominant positions as being about white people considering the blog is about race, the careful phrasing suggests to me that perhaps it speaks to those in dominant positions across other social locations as well - class, ability, or sexuality, for instance.

To parse out further the notion of the safe space, we have to move to a few other questions. Who are these people, identified as “they” and as oppositional to the safe space? How are they spoken about within blogs? How are their protests taken into account? And finally, how does a safe space work to protect against an adversarial actor? The easiest answer to the first question of *who* is to say the adversarial actors are white people. Both

Melody and Angela identify white people as being the ones frequently offended by their blogs, who send hate mail and who are engaging in tone policing the conversations occurring on blogs. This population is also specifically named in many of the other blogs I analyzed, where bloggers



may deliberately state that whites are not allowed to contribute to the blog, and that the space is not for them.

Not all blogs are so explicit with identifying white people as an adversarial opposition. Some blogs, those I label as more “neutral,” adopt a purely informative or matter-of-fact tone when writing about racism. For instance, the submission page of AWOC reads: “Questions? (Please read the FAQ before sending us questions. This is a WOC [women of color] space. We won't answer questions from white people. We DON'T exclude white passing WOC or WOC with white European heritage from this blog).” Even TINP has a similar proclamation on their submission page, which reads in part “If you are white, your submission will be deleted and especially if it's something fetishizing, derogatory, or racist towards Pilipinx people” (See Appendix A, “Front Page”).

How could these blogs that are clearly influential to many youth, blogs that speak from a platform of authority, engage in blatant displays of non-neutrality and, some would argue, active hostility? How can we in any way appreciate these spaces as instructional, if the instruction includes this type of language towards white populations? These questions move beyond simply debating the role of neutrality in instructional authorities, and requires drawing back to literatures on whiteness and the way race and racism is conceptualized in much of mainstream thought, and how the notion of safe spaces may connect to these conversations.

I argue that what these bloggers are identifying as the adversarial component, the “they” that forces them to create safe spaces in retaliation, is not simply the existence of white people as individuals. Instead, they identify *whiteness* as the problem, in that whiteness is a system that all whites benefit from, and that relies on the devaluation of nonwhite populations. Because inter-community conversations on the experience of being people of color return to conversations on

oppression and injustice, these bloggers are explicit in identifying whiteness as the *agent* behind this injustice. Further, because conversations on injustice are not neutral but emotional, what this means is that identifying whiteness as the agent behind these experiences with oppression may take an emotional and confrontational tone. When contextualized online, what this looks like is often a simplification of whiteness to memes and mockery of things like white tears, something that without further insight looks simply unjustifiably hostile.

What does this mean in terms of instructional environments? I would argue that in identifying unchallenged-whiteness as something that is actively silencing conversations on race, racism, oppression, the moderators make a conscious decision that in traditional classrooms is often known as “stepping back” and “stepping forward.” Classroom facilitators may ask that quieter voices in the room make an effort to speak up more, while those who know they talk frequently should remind themselves to take a second before speaking to allow others the chance. In this case, asking white people not to participate in certain blogs is an example of step back/step forward that is a deliberate political act in that it recognizes the historical silencing of certain voices and perspectives. Beyond simply just accepting the historical devaluation of certain voices, these bloggers are taking action in actively supporting the in-group perspective and voice.

Some may argue that there is no room for politics in a classroom, even an informal, online one. However, arguing for classrooms to be apolitical spaces is to ignore the fact that classrooms are not separate from the politics of everyday life. To take a “neutral” stance of inaction is to side with the majority, as the dominant population and dominant viewpoint is the one that has control over spaces and conversations, *unless* it is actively limited. “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor” (Brown 1984).

While calling out the problematic behavior of *specific* white people may play a role in some blogs, it by no means appears to be a primary focus in the purpose of these spaces. This distinction, and the nuance between whiteness and white people is not picked up by many.

“Does this mean that your blog is anti-white?” This question has been posed so many times to these blogs that responses to this question often appear explicitly on their Frequently Asked Questions pages. At times, the answers may be sarcastic, revealing an impatience with this reaction to their blogs.

However, not all blogs call out whiteness in this way. Some present themselves much more strongly as being primarily to build in-group dynamics without identifying whiteness or white people as adversarial components that should remain outside these conversations. For instance, consider these paraphrased excerpts from several blogs’ FAQ pages. One states that whites can learn from the blog, but they shouldn’t butt in; another blog goal states that whites are allowed in but should be warned, while another writes that white people are “welcome to follow and learn.” While this may lead to the temptation of creating divisions in blog types between blogs that have an attitude of restricting participation and blogs that don’t (and presumably don’t subscribe to that belief), consider the following quote, from Black-Australia, a blog for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to “discuss culture, history, oppression, current Indigenous issues and everything



in between.” In it, the blogger reveals that they stand with people who speak out of emotion, even if the blog Black-Australia does not speak in the same way. “Don’t say that it’s nice that my blog isn’t a particularly angry one and that it isn’t like *other* blogs out there. I have been receiving a lot of these type of asks recently and they’re really not on. Being angry is a legitimate response and emotion to hundreds of years of oppression” (Black-Australia, n.d.).

This quote reveals some of the challenges in discerning the beliefs that moderators hold when running to blog in a specific manner. Therefore, rather than divide blogs by “those who speak controversially” and “those who don’t,” I decided to pursue to a more nuanced approach in sorting blogs by type between two groups: those who included controversial language in their more static pages, and those who didn’t. To return to Johnston’s (2009) discussion on how to study culture in social movement research, recall that we can look to the artifact (the posts) as a social performance because the producer of the artifact (the moderator) has an audience (People of color? White? Mixed?) in mind when they produce a permanent object, which in this case, would be the content in the FAQ, About Us page, or sidebar for instance. (7). Therefore, I focus on the fact that, since visiting the static pages is one of the easiest and quickest ways to learn about a blog, moderators would want to use these static pages to perform their understanding of race to visitors, so that a visitor would get a message and know what type of space they were entering. The existence of FAQ pages in itself supports this idea that moderators seek to build a certain image of itself that would help answer some questions for a new visitor regarding what type of blog they were looking at.

This response to comments about tone-policing and respectability politics draws us back to Sefa Dei et. al’s (2004) work on the backlash against certain types of discourses. The argument is that, since speaking on racism is in essence oppositional to the mainstream

preservation of the status quo, people of color should “establish politics and strategies of our own and implement them in spaces and places in our choosing” (9). This recommendation is in response to the authors’ claim that any attempt to talk about racism will be “dismissed as emotional and self serving” (9). If we remember the typical critique about Tumblr, that bloggers take things too far and are far too personal, this observation seems to accurately frame the discourses and backlash in this space.



Looking back again at the other common blog purposes that arose from the data (“share stories and experiences,” “be angry and emotional,” “be believed,” “seek solidarity,” “validate and support”), it became clear that these are in some way tied to the desire to create a deliberate safe space for a specific in-group experience. These are conversations that we can presume may not be available elsewhere, and that even on Tumblr are hard to have without being intentional about trying to regulate the role of “outside” interference that would stifle or detract from the benefit of holding these conversations.

With a better understanding of what safe spaces are, and why they crop up so frequently in blog descriptions, in the next section we can return to building a theory on the instructional dynamics of this space, keeping in mind the specific needs of this population, and the political dynamics around articulating that need and supporting it.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING A COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

After having connected the dynamics of telling stories within a community to the notion of safe spaces, I give particular attention to the last major category of blog purposes: informing and educating. Throughout this description of the detailed organizational forms of blog layouts, I continue to make the argument that though not all blogs may directly state a desire to educate or inform, the common organizational frameworks these blogs follow are set up in a way that facilitates Gamson's (1992) claim that media unintentionally and intentionally serve as transmitters of ideology and beliefs. Other blog goals like "calling out," "raising awareness," "exercising voice" and even "talking and discussing" suggest an exchange of information that may be informative, regardless of the intention of the person in placing the content online and making it widely available.

Here I point to two different aspects of this organizational form that I argue are key - that moderators function as authorities that know *what* to call out and raise awareness about, and that they simultaneously serve as facilitators of others' ability to do the same by *providing the space* and outlining how it should be used. Moderators serving as informed authorities and facilitators of conversations is a core element in my analysis of instructional dynamics.

Ultimately, I outline how blogs' instructional dynamics contribute to what Melody calls the building of the *collective knowledge* of the community. To do so, I base my arguments on the argument that objective measurements can't quantify the possibilities for collective growth that occurs in these spaces. While facts and vocabularies can be "taught" by blog moderators, the affective experience of engaging with these spaces is not a top-down instructional process but rather one of facilitated *exposure* that has the possibility of stirring individual political consciousness as a pushback against damaging racial narratives. This exposure includes the

shared group articulation of feelings and vocabularies of injustice, and the interactions between a community of people also exploring the experience of being a person of color.

Moderators as Authorities and Facilitators

Delving into the other sidebar pages of the two case studies and of the larger sample of blogs allows me to illustrate how I came to understand moderators as largely fulfilling these two functions. In this section, I cover some of the more common page types: Ask, Guidelines, FAQ (See Appendix A for the common types). Though I won't discuss further, it's helpful to understanding instructional dynamics to recall the earlier discussion around tagging, or how moderators label posts to create an archive of relevant information for other users to take advantage of the collective, building knowledge.

Most obvious is to begin with the Ask page - something the majority of blogs have, where people can submit questions or comments to be reviewed by the moderators. Moderators then review questions and answer them publicly, posting answers to questions on topics like discovering and embracing identity, about calling out friends and family, or about what constitutes a culturally appropriative act, for instance. This in itself is telling in how there is a collaborative and interactive element between the community and the moderators, that there is to some degree a mutual agreement that the young people running blogs have a type of authority that allows them to provide trusted advice or information about race, ethnicity, and injustice. For blogs with multiple moderators, questions can be left towards the moderator with the most qualifications to answer the question.

Often, questions that have been asked are redirected and are posed to the community to be answered by anyone who feels informed or has an experience to share. This moves the moderator's role from an authority with "the answers," to a facilitator, coordinating the

community's collective advice and experience. In this way, the classroom parallel of answering questions through fostering dialogue is clear. Angela describes this opening up of conversation as a deliberate act to find accountability in the content and information on the blog. By seeking out voices and experiences from the community, she notes that there is "an organic set of oversight and accountability from the ground up." What this means too is that blogs that turn to their community members to answer a question submitted by another community member, it returns some power back to the hands of the communities blogs want to engage with, and that act fosters a sense of collaboration and mutuality in developing a collective knowledge.

It is common for blogs to have guidelines that they require users to obey by if those users want to have questions answered or have comments posted publicly. This is not unlike in a classroom environment where students collaboratively create ground rules for encouraging productive and respectful conversation. At times, the moderators may provide more curt rules of engagement, like outright refusing to answer basic questions that could be researched elsewhere, often pre-emptively explaining in an FAQ page with more colorful language why this is. The impatience that is revealed in these guidelines often stems from the overwhelming amount of requests they receive for help or information. For instance, a moderator at ReclaimingAsia writes that, "Personally, in my first three days as a moderator to this blog, I literally fielded over 320 asks," noting that this takes place in a community of about 6000 followers, with about 20 moderators running that blog's page. Outside the sheer amount of dedication this reveals, it also quantifies significant usage of these blogs as resources and authorities with the capacity to answer questions from others.

That the high interaction levels between followers and moderators often requires the creation of formalized structures shouldn't lead us to lean entirely towards claiming that the

space is formal as a whole. Not all posts are complete with citations, or even spell-checked or switched out of casual vernacular. Some posts are made or shared based on the aesthetic value, often revolving around cultural images- posts that admire a black celebrity, for instance, or posts that highlight the traditional dress of a certain underappreciated group. While these may be instances of instruction through exposure, they also contribute to the creation of a “classroom” environment that is a safe space, in that they bring to focus a traditionally marginalized people’s achievements, accomplished individuals, the beauty of their geographical origins, among other positive and perhaps unappreciated cultural references.

How can we conceptualize in our instructional framework the blog content that may be categorized as simply a celebration or appreciation of culture? A tentative parallel is to think about the role of *cariño* (“caring”) in the educational literature, as an articulation of respect and care for the student by the teacher. Lewis et. al (2012) defines the importance of this social dynamic on the educational process with the following observation: “One especially important measure of relationship quality is caring—that is, the ability to listen to, empathize with, and be moved by the plight or feelings of the other person” (3). This can be particularly influential with minority students, if teachers engage with the students’ home cultures or language. While bloggers may be reblogging these posts for their own benefit, or personal interest and identification with these topics, it may be possible that the young people visiting these pages may be drawn into continuing to engage with this space on issues of race and racism if they feel the facilitator of that space (the moderators) share a common respect for their background. I suspect for many young people, seeing images or reading content that reflects their home cultures may not typically be occurring in schools, since, as Melody noted, the educational system rarely teaches youth about race. Further, Melody observed that this positive dynamic is likely to be

bolstered by the fact that “youth identify with youth,” and that they can find spaces of common ground.

We should turn to additional data found in the next main page type - the Frequently Asked Question pages. Ending with this page type is useful because it is here that many moderators not only preemptively answer common questions about race and racism, but also often take a stand on how they frame their language choices, and how they use this platform to talk back against certain narratives. In doing so, they are using their platform to voice an alternative to damaging narratives on race and people of color.

The FAQ pages are often a mix of formal and informal language. Interestingly, both approaches answer straightforward questions about race (what is a person of color? what counts as appropriation?), but also move into more tenuous territory about their *approach* to understanding race and racism, asking questions like “Aren’t you being reverse racist?” “Why do you care so much about who wears dreadlocks?” In answering these questions, moderators can take a purely factual approach, linking readers to outside academic articles or to another Tumblr user who has a particularly thorough post explaining a concept. Often, alongside these factual approaches are the use of ironic imagery or language for questions they may perceive as ignorant or entitled, or simply curse words for questions that they view as unproductively rude or purposefully inflammatory.

The interesting aspects of these FAQ’s are often the justifications that moderators provide for the way they speak or think about an issue. The frequent necessity of making these justifications on FAQ pages indicates that there is an ongoing pushback occurring against these blogs, even as they are designated as safe spaces for people of color *themselves* to pushback against damaging narratives. Here I draw in an important observation made by Angela on the

invisible work done by some moderators. She notes that, because of her blog's stance on limiting white people's involvements in these intra-community conversations, the blog is at times privately sent hate mail in their submission box, "almost always" by white people. Rather than publish these along with other submissions, she and other moderators delete them, because they don't want their followers to have to be exposed to those narratives when the space is meant to be for their own benefit.

Angela goes on to note that the moderators on her blog were deliberate in thinking about how to incorporate outside criticism, and ultimately decided that publicizing concerns from white people should be minimized, because "that was never the point of the blog." This is not an avoidance or a refusal to engage with criticism against the blog. They often tackle similar questions and critiques in their FAQ pages. We can see it instead as an assertion of control and an act of agency over the conversation by *preemptively* addressing criticism in these FAQ pages. In being preemptive in the FAQ, the moderators then clear up the blog for relevant useful conversation while asserting their stance for how they want their blog to talk about race.

While this may serve as a deterrent to some who want to post hate mail, what it also does is serve as an archive of arguments that others can read, and perhaps equip themselves with. Along these lines, Melody indicated to me that she hopes those visiting her blog can find a sense of community, but also a vocabulary, "a way to articulate how they feel about racism beyond just feelings... I hope that the answers we give or the answers the community gives to them are acceptable enough that they can use that in their day-to-day lives. I hope that it goes beyond just being online."

What Melody describes has been my own experience when I was in high school and using Tumblr as a place to start engaging with race and racism. I found strength in finding that

others were confrontationally talking back against race and racism in ways that felt sharp and unapologetic, and reading the explicit justifications behind these styles of discourses gave me the confidence in believing that I also could participate in this type of challenge. In having the platform to sustain these types of challenges, these blogs serve as archives and models for new Tumblr users to encounter, for those who begin to explore Tumblr as a place to think about race. Melody describes her own initial exposure to controversial and emotional styles of speaking on Tumblr as “cathartic” because it identified so strongly with the things going on in her life as a mixed Chinese-Iranian woman.

This blurring of both emotionally engaging with content and critiques on race and racism and factually learning vocabulary and alternative perspectives and histories on Tumblr is the core of my argument on how we might frame the ways blogs led by young people of color are poised to present to youth an instructional environment on issues of race. The technical characteristics and the moderator decisions that allow for significant collaboration within the community make it an accessible place for youth to turn to engage with race and racism. Further, the archival qualities of race-themed blogs means that this instructional environment never has set hours or an off-time. The content they are engaging with remains accessible in the sense that it is open to critique from the community members, and is largely composed of reactions to current events on the offline world. In the end, because the (un)intentional instructional potential of Tumblr blogs are often rooted in the intentional dynamics of safe spaces, we have to recognize that the instructional dynamic may be beneficial primarily for the in-group communities that these bloggers aim to support.

The instructional dynamic may not be as clear-cut as other spaces that are explicitly designed for teaching. Further, we have to confront the fact that many bloggers on Tumblr do not

interpret their actions as being for the purpose of educating others, in part because of the exhausting emotional labor of being constantly interrogated for the same information about race from strangers. They may not identify with the label that inspired this framework of analysis, that “virtual classrooms for potential political activists.”

What we do see are hints of how bloggers on Tumblr may be differently conceptualizing a larger purpose to their actions. We can see this in one blog goal that identifies its purpose as pursuing “intersectionality and collective liberation,” or buried in a tiny note on a separate blog, almost as a private musing: “Most people of color are starting to wake up and to break the limitations set on our own minds...it’s only a matter of time.” Or it may be almost a sense of resignation, as Melody writes that though she has no interest in teaching outsiders, “for people who are like my inheritors, if you want to call it that, for those people, it’s not that I have a responsibility, but I feel like I have a weakness to mentoring them.. helping them out in some way.” These common strands may not be as easy to categorize as collective action in a unified, large-scale sense, but I would argue that they do indicate a recognition of a larger collective and a sense of sharedness in racial injustice, a context that unites them and encourages them to take part in pushing back in small but consistent actions in their daily online lives.

CHAPTER 3: “I’M HERE FOR MY COMMUNITY”

In this chapter, I engage first with the narratives that emerged in my interviews with both moderators. With the insight that comes from the longevity and extent of their involvement in these communities, I work to describe more tangibly the exchange between audience and moderators, and additionally, to think about how the dynamics of this exchange compares with the intended goals that these moderators have when blogging.

Alongside these interviews, I turn to specific posts to highlight different types of content that moderators are choosing to share through their platform. Beyond simply showing the existence of critiques around race, however, I also work to show the variety of ways young people on these blogs use these platforms. Scholarship has already demonstrated the ways youth use social media to push back against racial narratives (Watkins 2014, Bonilla & Rosa 2015). Therefore, in this chapter I work to stress what I find most distinct about Tumblr, and not already theorized in earlier studies. This includes controversial language use, of course, but also the ways that youth are working to transform this platform itself.

Moderating a Race-Themed Blog

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Angela is in her twenties, having been on Tumblr for the past five or six years. In her time on Tumblr, she notes that Tumblr has gone through changes where there is now expanded access to what Asian Americans have available as resources, since more people have been starting blogs for this community, whereas there were little to none when she began. Thus, she joined this blog, started by a teenager in order to share the more emotional aspects of being Asian American.

Regarding her blog, she notes that it is a heavy commitment, where moderators work hard to provide a safe space where their community members don’t have to take into

consideration dominant groups' feelings when talking about issues that affect their community. Much of this demographic are high school students, she notes, who want to talk about things they saw in the media with others on the blog. As far as her role as moderator goes, Angela says she and other moderators are really only meant to facilitate what others are saying by providing the platform, not by guiding the conversation by sending information to the followers. Instead, the moderators provide a space with specific types of defenses that help shield people from getting harassed when discussing tense issues. In thinking about the impact of her work, Angela notes that she considers expanding knowledge and awareness to be incredibly valuable work.

For Melody, moderator of a mixed-race blog and also in her twenties, she has a similar tenure serving as moderator on Tumblr - four years total. The blog that Melody moderates for has undergone change over the years, where they have redefined what it meant for them to use the phrase "mixed-race" on their blog by holding a community discussion. It's common for the blog to adapt based off of new questions or needs from their community - she says that they "coordinate actions" to improve their blog based on the feedback they get on what they haven't been sufficiently paying attention to.

I asked Melody about what types of coordinated actions blogs might undertake, and she listed things like distributing information about things that are occurring, creating Go Fund Me pages to support a community member in distress, "signal boosting" important posts by reblogging them for heightened visibility, and holding serious inter-community discussions about organizing or other things occurring in the community. She says that there is rarely discussion between blog moderators, but that there was one instance in which 2-3 blogs coordinated an action together against the clothing brand Forever 21 to protest a culturally

appropriate shirt that was being sold. Further in this chapter, we will see examples of some of these actions being carried out by other blogs in coordinated ways.

Despite the lack of regular coordination between major blogs, Melody enthusiastically describes both the benefits and the drawbacks she experiences from the extensive community/moderator interactions on the blog. She personally benefitted from Tumblr in connecting her with people her age interested in race as well, seeing as “in high school, they don’t teach you anything, and Tumblr helped me develop my awareness.” She argues that, in a system that doesn’t teach kids about race, Tumblr “has a place in awakening your consciousness,” and being able to situate yourself with others politically, in particular for people who have nowhere else to turn. The specific terms that Melody uses confirmed with me that there was something to the idea that conversations on Tumblr could be facilitating a growth towards the development of a political consciousness.

The other moderators and her also have a similar blog goal to Angela, in seeking to provide a safe space where they can have intercommunity critical discussions “and now have people think we’re trying to hurt them.” However, Melody also often mentions a type of exhaustion. Because of the cyclical nature of Tumblr, new users come in often and ask the same types of questions, and try to hold conversations that she is already jaded to, having been on the platform for so long. However, she has noticed that the most common types of questions she receives has changed over time - less about how to deal with having a white family, and more about whether or not people should be using the term “person of color” to describe themselves.

This is an interesting shift that Melody is able to see, in that she, as an authority figure on a popular blog, is witness to people’s (often anonymously submitted) fears and anxieties and questions on the role of race in their own life. Indeed, she notes that the demographic are mostly

15-17 year olds with questions, and total they receive one or two questions a day, sometimes up to ten. With fielding constant questions, she speaks of a shift she made in considering who she wanted to speak to from the blog. “I used to think I was teaching,” she says, “but now with fatigue, I’m more here for the people in my own community. If you’re outside of that, I’m not really here to teach them about race. It’s not my job.” However, though she is seen as an authority figure, she also makes it clear that she sees herself not so much teaching in that she learns from the community members too.

Before ending our interview, I asked Melody what she hoped someone would get from visiting her blog. She answered that the top thing she hoped would be a sense of community and belonging that they didn’t have before. She wanted people to be able to connect with “people who get it.” Second, she wrote that she hopes that people get a vocabulary from using her page, one that would be useful in the everyday for them to continue tackling these issues offline. As in our earlier discussion on major blog goals, it seems vital to connect the notion of a safe space, of a space that benefits the community, to the potential intellectual or consciousness-raising work that might occur online. In the following section, I will expand briefly on the ideas that are being circulated on the blogs, before spending time looking at the types of actions that Melody had mentioned occurs under the initiative of young people for other youth.

Countering Mainstream Narratives on Tumblr

As stated, I will focus less on what the literature has already shown to be the case for online practices carried out by young people of color. To briefly return to this literature, consider Bonilla and Rosa’s (2015) study of racial politics on Twitter. The authors demonstrate how people of color use Twitter to challenge racial injustice, counter mainstream narratives, reimagine group identities, share news on recent events, and document experiences that may be

ignored by the media (6). Similarly, Craig Watkins' (2014) analysis of Twitter hashtags emphasizes the "creative, critical, and communal" nature of challenges to the mainstream as youth contest media narratives and redirect conversations. That these same practices occur on Tumblr is no surprise, as it's often that posts on Tumblr are direct screenshots of thoughts expressed first on Tumblr. Therefore, I will focus on some ways of engaging with race that are more unique to Tumblr itself.

This is an excerpt of a highly structured post written for "the Good White Person™," or presumably white Tumblr users. This self-named resource post provides over 100 links to content written by Tumblr users and by academic scholars on topics like reverse racism and white privilege.

vasundharaa:

This is a resource post for all the **Good White Person™**s out there. You know, the ones who say things like "It's not my fault I'm white! Don't generalize white people!", or "I'm appreciating your culture! You should be proud!", or "Why do you hate all white people, look I'm a special snowflake who's not racist give me an award for meeting the minimum requirements for being a decent human being".

Well, if you are **actually interested** in understanding racism and how it ties into cultural appropriation, please read instead of endlessly badgering PoCs on tumblr with your cliched, unoriginal arguments and repeating the same questions over and over.

On White Privilege

aka don't blame me just because I'm white:

- [It's Not My Fault I Was Born White: Basics of White Privilege x](#)
- [Racial Divide x](#)
- [Endless Examples of White Privilege x](#)
- [You Cannot Know What It's Like To Be A Racial Minority x](#)
- [Intersectional Feminism x](#)
- [White Privilege Does Not Mean White People Have Perfect Lives x](#)

Though it's not made explicit in this post, the beginning paragraph of Vasundharaa's post references a joke that is common to online communities: the term "white tears." The use of this sarcastic and humorously dismissive language complicates any romanticized notion of how youth produce and consume online content in that it looks immediately hostile, but instead, it requires us to look beyond initial impression to understand young people of color on their own ground. I would argue that people in the communities around these race-themed blogs recognize the function of an idea like "white tears" as being a sharp directing of attention towards the fact that the issue that is bothering the white person is one related to white privilege. Here, the first

paragraph is in reference to an imagined, frustrated white person who has been denied immediate access to answers about race. The poster begrudgingly chooses to engage with the white person, providing a rather extensive list of additional readings, but in doing so, makes it clear that the person needs to check the way they engage with people of color so that they don't fall back on the comfort that comes with being in a position to benefit from white privilege.

whitegirlssaintshit:

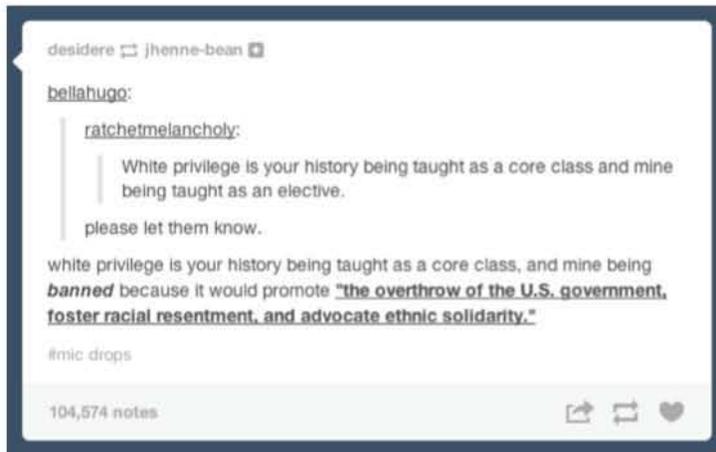
I could literally go off into a tangent about how my url is not an act of hatred, but rather 1) a dismissal of exclusionary white feminism that does nothing for and ignores the needs of others, 2) an attack against the idea that white women, who are infantilized and coddled through the patriarchy, are exempt from oppressing minorities, simply because they experience oppression as women, and 3) a refusal of eurocentric beauty standards that are constantly appropriating other people's "signature" characteristics that hurt everybody...

and there will still be someone around here like "... okay so why do you hate white women?"

The figure on the left illustrates one way that youth on Tumblr specifically address the controversy of the way youth choose to speak,

describing why they decided to engage with race in the ways they do. These reflective posts are important to situating the content that is shared and produced in what young people *actually* mean when by producing them. Again, the common theme is reading beyond face value, and challenging yourself to understand the emotional exhaustion that is often behind engaging sarcastically or mockingly with whiteness. Whitegirlssaintshit, in explaining her word choice, also makes a final jab at the frustration of engaging with users who don't understand the reasoning behind this humor. These posts illustrate well the likeliness for misunderstanding between an unsuspecting visitor, and a community member who is well aware of the way language is used on Tumblr for a purpose beyond the immediate impression it gives.

This next post is a good example of straightforward challenge of something structural



that devalues the experiences of people of color. “White privilege is your history being taught as a core class and mine being taught as an elective.” This author is referring to ethnic studies versus traditionally whitewashed curriculum in schools. In this we can

read a challenge - an identification of an injustice, almost a confrontational calling out, by using terms like *yours* and *mine*. This author is speaking to someone - an unidentified white audience, who perhaps is seen as ignorant to the injustice of this fact, one that is commonly taken as normal. Underneath is an addition by a different user, citing a direct quote from a law in Arizona that was attempting to justify banning ethnic studies in public schools. Clicking on the bold text brings you to a Huffington Post explaining the legal and historical backdrop to this quote. This post has over 100,000 notes, which means that over 100,000 users reblogged or liked it. This is not to mention all the users who viewed this post, and perhaps reflected in some way on the content, without directly interacting with it.

Another particularly sharp pushback against damaging mainstream racial discourses can be seen in this post about a fight that occurred among white reporters. In this post, commenters build on each other’s reactions, using the language traditionally used by the media when a fight occurs between black people and applying it directly to this fight among white reports. It cites other damaging racial narratives - that of broken homes and absent fathers, notions of lacking self-respect, and black-on-black crime. Though the post might appear unnecessarily hostile



Jim Roberts
@nycjim



Fight breaks out at #WHCD afterparty between Fox News & HuffPost reporters. wpo.st/39gX1 @daveweigel



sale-aholic:

Priceless.

What are these thugs doing?

Can we talk about white on white crime in this country?

Yes, this needs to be brought up at the next GOP debate. I need to hear about their plans to address this ever growing problem.

How are we suppose to respect them if they don't respect themselves?

The problems clearly begin at home. Raised by unwed single mothers, deserted by their daddies before they even born- how can we expect them to be honorable, productive members of society without a proper foundation?

We give them constant chances to prove that they can be more than thugs and this is the result, this is what happens when you're abandoned by a father, no class at all

towards race, what it really does is expose a double standard and play onto the absurdity that they anticipate white readers will feel when they ask white the race of these reporters matters. Again, it isn't about the individuals as white men, but about the larger narratives that privilege whiteness and subjugates people of color to these negative narratives.

Taking Action Within Tumblr

However, outside of the common themes of these individual posts, there are a few small-scale collective

actions inside Tumblr that users participate in. This includes for instance one specific blog focused on mixed Latinx identity that hosts something called #Latinxtuesdays, a weekly

Dear Latinas/Queridas Latinas

I'm sure you all know the current state of the Latina tag, so here's an idea: Tag all your posts as "Latina". Even if it's you just talking about your day or if it's a picture of you looking fabulous, TAG IT. Let's bomb and take this tag back together!

movement where people of color submit selfies and brief biographies of themselves to the blog, discussing their experiences being mixed race

and generally praising the blog for being a place to celebrate their origins. These brief autobiographies largely speak of a process of coming to terms with their mixed race status, and speak of a transformation to feelings of pride and self-discovery.

If we conform to the binary thinking of social media as superficial, we completely miss the meaning of these purposeful selfies, where young people are using the internet to celebrate and embrace their common identities and create a sense of group identity. These race or ethnicity based Tumblr-wide actions are common practices on a number of blogs and can raise a lot of attention and participation. In fact, recent scholarship identifies selfies as “deeply engaged cultural production” in that they have a participatory element in being connected to a larger community (Jenkins et. al 2015: 10).

The post below regarding the new blog “Afrolatinxsunited” is a recent example of the



continuing development and growth of Tumblr. This post was reblogged by one of the blogs I was studying, and is an attempt to help a community gain visibility (signal boost), as these moderators worked to create a space to speak to an experience that they saw was not represented on Tumblr. They state the goal of the space in the post, and purposefully

mention how other users can help them address this invisibility on Tumblr by spreading this particular post as promoting awareness.

As mentioned earlier, another form of taking direct action on an issue is the sharing of emergency fundraising posts for members of the community who are struggling. These are very common, and if we think across social location, particularly common for queer people of color who have unstable living situations due to their identity. However, I will not be highlighting a fundraising post out of privacy for the person requesting assistance.

Regardless, these posts are largely representative of three other major events that are common across many blogs - a day to celebrate identity and reclaim a tag, the promotion of new blogs to speak to underserved populations, and fundraising. Of course, this list is just a sample, but illustrates why we should be shifting out of a rhetoric of “potential” to take action, into one that recognizes the actions youth are taking already on this platform.

CONCLUSION

I began this research in hopes of finding solid theoretical ground from which to begin to understand my participation on the more controversial parts of Tumblr. As a person committed to studying race in academia, I was hesitant about the actual value of engaging online through jokes and gifs a topic that had a weighty seriousness in the classroom. However, part of the work I seek to do is to bridge together the ordinary elements of everyday life with academic theory that situates them in larger conversations. Therefore, I knew it was important to move past the discomfort that the work I was doing and the spaces I studied were illegitimate just because they took a nontraditional form. I knew from talking with others and from reading bloggers' reflections online that my positive experience was not unique, but part of a larger group of people absorbed in similar practices.

Having looked at data drawn from over fifty blogs, and having spoken with moderators who give shape to these spaces, I found the dynamics of blogging about race on Tumblr to be far more elaborate than I had anticipated. Young people have carved out spaces in Tumblr as platforms to exert ownership over, creating communities of shared interest around the desire to have these conversations. Individually and collaboratively, they've developed similar organizational structures, hierarchies, rules and responsibilities, sustaining these practices over time and adapting them to meet the changing needs of the communities these blogs speak to. In creating these alternative spaces to hold conversations, young people of color have a platform to experiment with and challenge what it means to talk about race and racism.

To return to my original guiding questions, I was interested in looking at the interaction of three different aspects of race-themed blogging: 1. The instructional dynamics of these spaces, 2. The critiques against mainstream racial discourses, and 3. The potentially collective nature of

these critiques as a form of action. However, it seems appropriate now to add a fourth factor to these sets of questions: the community-oriented nature of these spaces. In introducing the concern for supporting a community as an integral part of understanding these spaces, we can begin to blur the boundaries of each set of theories in a way that more accurately represents the connections between often-informal practices that organically form linkages.

In making concluding remarks, I begin by briefly reviewing key findings for each of the four elements at play, focusing on the ways each element influences the others. I then review some of the theoretical and practical implications of these findings before moving onto the some of the limitations and challenges of conducting this research. I end with some promising avenues for further research.

I argue we should be looking at these spaces in terms of their instructional dynamics, because of how the pages continue to situate themselves as authorities in providing information, accepting questions and giving answers, and also in dictating a certain type of conversation to occur on that particular page, with accompanying guidelines. However, it is clear that we cannot ignore the other dynamic occurring in this space - the creation of safe spaces, where people of color could go to find support and validation, as well as to be angry and fed up with the way race plays out unjustly in their lives, and the way they were being limited in how they were allowed to speak on it around others. And in this process of creating a space of support and validation against a racially unjust world, users may be engaging with and learning a vocabulary to challenge the unjust, a way of framing the social world that says yes, I see the injustice, and we can acknowledge that pain among others who understand.

In using controversial language, many moderators specifically addressed why they were mocking or sarcastic. Many moderators recognized anger and humor as legitimate responses

against racial injustice, deciding they are not going to stifle their conversations to accommodate white people's feelings or comfort, because outside of Tumblr *their* own feelings are rarely privileged, and they're often told to "lighten up" and take a joke. It becomes then a purposeful shifting of power dynamics (in this case by setting the tone of a conversation) in favor of an in-group that is normally disadvantaged. By setting these boundaries against white people participating in these spaces, it is a preemptive protection of safe spaces for people of color, because of the exhaustion of taking up the burden of white people wanting to be convinced that racism exists, because this labor always falls on the shoulders of people of color.

Considering that much of the themes on Tumblr revolve around issues of identity, agency, and the emotional cognition of injustice, conversations on Tumblr have what might be called the "antecedent" conditions that help support a collective action mindset (Gamson 1992). However, we need to move away from the dichotomy of 'is it' or "is it not" activism, and more instead towards something more generative that recognizes the value of what youth are doing right now, not just what they can do when they get older. I stress that these young people are *already* taking action to make this platform a space for them to reclaim and reshape racial narratives. It is evident from the communal nature of reblogging between race-themed blogs that there is alignment in the sets of beliefs on race that moderators subscribe to, even if it is not outright compared. I turn again to Johnston (2009) to argue that these blogs share a fundamental feature with social movements, that of being "a clustering of certain critiques performed together," which we can read as the development of new ways of making sense of the everyday world around them (Johnston 2009: 9, Jasper 2014: 9).

In thinking about action, many are preoccupied with the question of scalability and reach of the impact of the action. Do online actions truly matter? I argue that if we devalue these acts

because they are not as grandiose as what many refer to as the ideal for social justice action (think: the Civil Rights Movement), then it is easy to remain skeptical about the influence of these practices on social life. However, having sketched out the different ways that young people have organized themselves and taken action towards a shared goal, I argue that the sustained communal (if individually-performed) interest in critiquing race and voicing alternatives is a way to continue to expand what it means to be civically engaged, including where youth can organize towards a goal they have collaboratively decided.

What this space illustrates about young people today is ultimately reassuring in a time when racist discourses and narratives are being voiced by high-level political figures, and are seen by many as refreshingly honest rather than dangerous for the safety and well-being of people of color. These practices reveal that youth are seeing the world around them as malleable, as open to be challenged in that they are readily identifying injustices, and also encouraging each other to remain aware about these injustices. Thus, this research adds to the work of expanding what we define as civic engagement, as we can see a common attitude of users encouraging each other to “stay woke,” acted on by logging onto Tumblr and creating posts to share with one another.

As Melody hinted at earlier, another important element of Tumblr is its potential to connect disparate people with others who share a common interest, and collaborate with one another to create something that can serve the public. Many of the blogs’ moderators featured people who lived across the country from each other, even across the world, and this platform allows them to connect in a way that has an impact on other youth who come to Tumblr to read about race. Even if what they build together exists solely online as a blog page, I would argue that the dedication involved in maintaining these pages, and in sustaining the instructional

dynamics of these pages that foster interaction, are important processes in building sites where political awareness is highly encouraged. These are sites that youth identify among themselves as necessary, and operate entirely outside of “adult” interventions. Thus, it’s unsurprising that the forms they take, in being playful, sarcastic and mocking, for instance, don’t fit into the molds of what scholarship traditionally imagines political awareness and engagement to be.

In thinking about how to improve this research, it would have been beneficial to have been able to get in contact with more moderators. I found the narratives to be highly compelling in illustrating what outside eyes could not see - changes in conversations among these communities, or disruptions in how groups of moderators wanted to tackle a specific issue, for instance. A question that lingered on my mind was the potential for Tumblr blogs to serve as a living archive – one where we can see a snapshot of current anxieties that young people of color have when they reach out to others for answers to their questions, often posed anonymously.

I also would recommend for further research getting involved with some community members, or regular readers of these blogs. One element that I suspect would be salient would be age difference. Are college-aged students getting something different out of using Tumblr than high school students? Also worth exploring is the gender dynamic that arose from this study. Why is it that nearly all moderators are women?

The nature of rapidly changing offline events means that what occurs on Tumblr is always in flux. This research worked to get a snapshot of one particular moment in which young



jasmindahh Follow

I swear, I feel so fulfilled when I see younger generations questioning authority and really understanding how systemic racism affects us. Shit makes me so happy



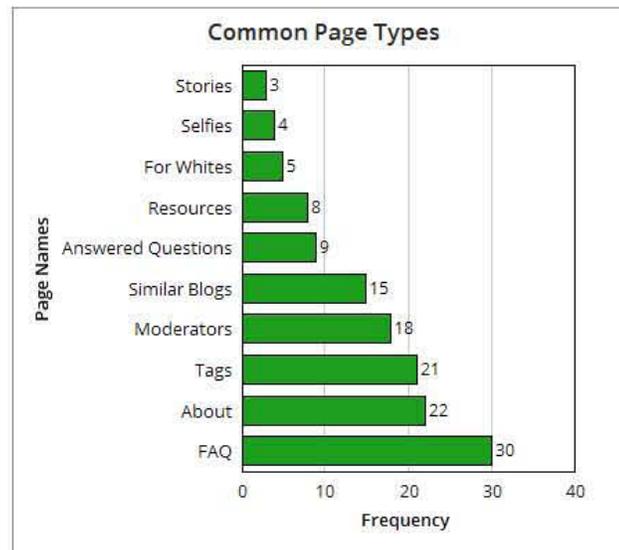
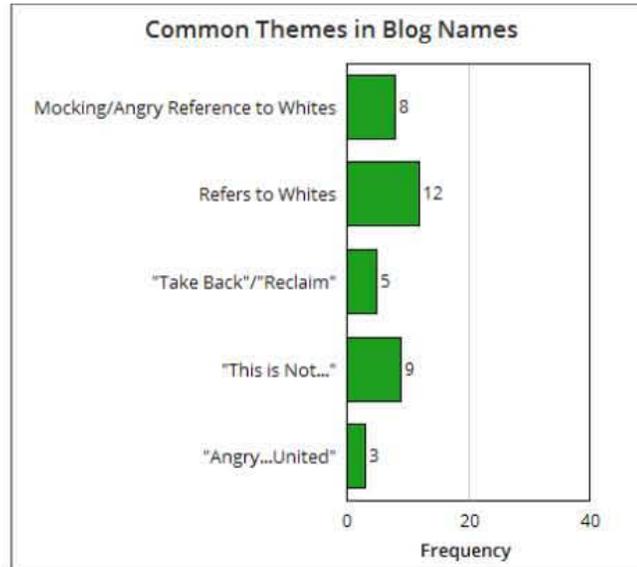
#staywoke

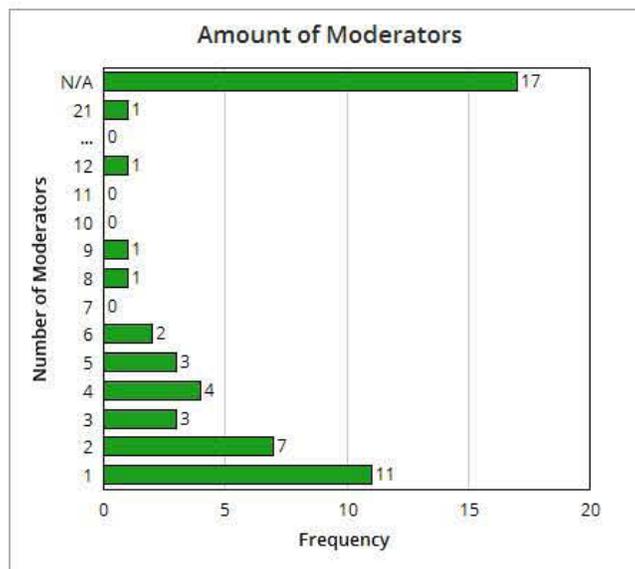
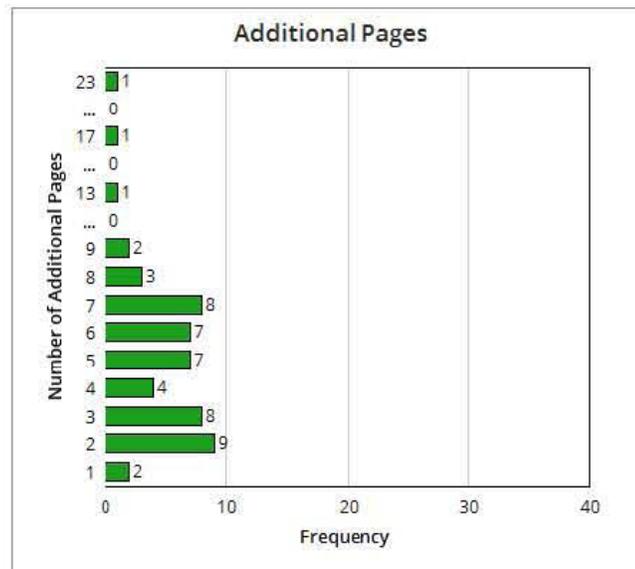
1 note

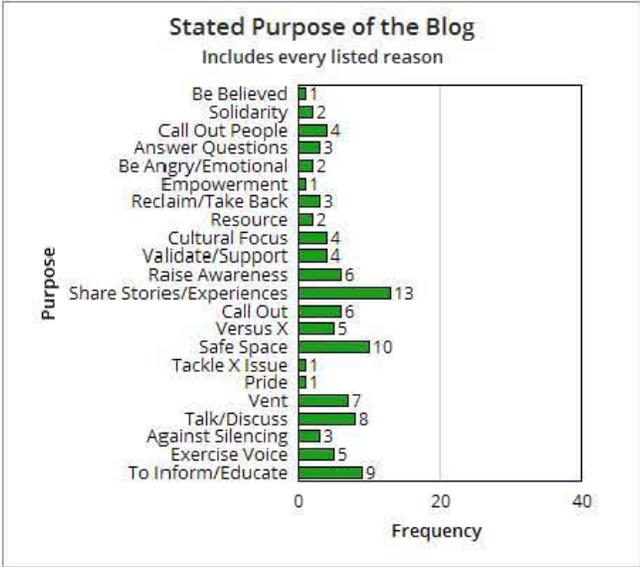


people ran spaces where they could hold a certain set of conversations among themselves that they thought were necessary and not possible elsewhere. Tumblr is a site where youth can be anonymous, where they can have control over how they want to design spaces to engage around race. Ultimately, I hope to pose the following question: by taking seriously the way young people envisioned these spaces and their possibilities, what can we learn about their desire for a different social reality, a new way of engaging with one another, that perhaps may only exist now online?

APPENDIX A







APPENDIX B: Angry Women of Color United

All images dated from May 2nd 2016.

Front Page

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



A safe space for women of color. Our bodies are not land for colonialism. We're not going to perpetuate sexual stereotypes created by racist pornography. We're not uncivilized, hypersexualized, exotic women. Our voices WILL be heard and we WILL fight back. Contact: angrywocunited@gmail.com 2 Online Users



Questions? (Please read the FAQ before sending us questions. This is a WOC space. We won't answer questions from white people. We DON'T exclude white passing WOC or WOC with white European heritage from this blog.)

Submit

Mods

FAQ

About AWCU

Sisters

To White Men

To White Women

Archive

THEME BY STJN



cathrynvirginia:

Among The Magnolias

Ever since hearing that Frida Kahlo and Josephine Baker had an affair at some point within their lifetimes, I knew I wanted to draw about it. Two beautiful, queer women of color, culture creators and taste makers both.

MAY 2ND
4:51 PM
383 NOTES
SOURCE:
VIA:

George Takei
Yesterday at 11:06am

So let me get this straight. You cast a white actress so you wouldn't hurt sales...in Asia? This backpedaling is nearly as cringeworthy as the casting. Marvel must think we're all idiots.



Marvel's Explanation for Tilda Swinton Casting Is Very "Strange" To Some

Studio cites need to appease Chinese market.

4:43 PM
58,950 NOTES
SOURCE:
VIA:

Ask Page

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/ask>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



Questions? (Please read the FAQ before sending us questions. This is a WOC space. We won't answer questions from white people. We DON'T exclude white passing WOC or WOC with white European heritage from this blog.)

[Login](#) or [sign up](#) for Tumblr to ask a question

Submit Page

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/submit>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



A safe space for women of color. Our bodies are not land for colonialism. We're not going to perpetuate sexual stereotypes created by racist

Submit

When you send a submission tag anything that could be triggering. We do not accept submissions from white women, white feminists, white men etc.

Text	<input type="text" value="Name (required)"/>	<input type="text" value="Email (required)"/>
Title		Optional
B / I / S [Link] [Image] [List] [List] [Image] [Arrow]		
Tags: <input type="checkbox"/> submission <input type="checkbox"/> racism <input type="checkbox"/> slurs tw <input type="checkbox"/> violence tw <input type="checkbox"/> rape tw <input type="checkbox"/> fetishization <input type="checkbox"/> sexism <input type="checkbox"/> tw misogynist slurs		
<input type="checkbox"/> I accept the Terms of Submission		<input type="button" value="Submit"/>

About the Moderators

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/mods>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



Mods

Brianna:

Hi I'm Brianna! My dad was adopted from Cuba and is mixed with Black and white, and my mom is German, Irish, and Scottish. I'm currently studying communications at a local college so I can go into journalism. I love my cats and they are my babies.

G:

Hello, I'm G! (not spelling my full name) the creator of AWCU. I'm a 19 year-old bisexual, Congolese girl. I speak English, French, Mandarin Chinese, Lingala, and I want to learn Bengali. I'm interested in Art, the Avant Garde, Anime, and Philosophy. And I'm infatuated with the babe Matthew Healy from The 1975. I also like Heavy Metal.

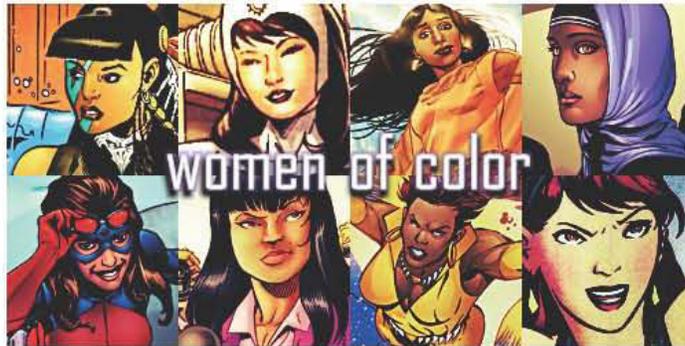
About Page

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/aboutawcu>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



About AWCU



Angry Women of Color United is a safe space for non-white people who identify themselves as girls/women, women of color who have white European heritage and/or white passing features are welcomed.

FAQ Page

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/faq>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



A safe space for women of color. Our bodies are not land for colonialism. We're not going to perpetuate sexual stereotypes created by racist pornography. We're not uncivilized, hypersexualized, exotic women. Our voices WILL be heard and we WILL fight back. Contact: angrywocunited@gmail.com 2 Online Users



Questions? (Please read the FAQ before sending us questions. This is a WOC space. We won't answer questions from white people. We DON'T exclude white passing WOC or WOC with white European heritage from this blog.)

Submit

Mods

FAQ

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Sisters

To White Men

To White Women

Archive

THEME BY STJN

FAQ

Q: "What is a woman of color?"

A: A non-white woman.

Q: "How are Asian women woc? They have light skin."

A: Asian woc or any light skinned woc **ARE** woc. Light skin \neq whiteness.

Q: "I'm Latina, but I'm light-skinned/white passing. Am I a person of color?"

A: We can't answer this. There are white people in Latin America. White Latinx people are still Latinx, but not people of color. We don't know if you're just white passing or if you're a white Latinx. If you can, ask your parents.

Q: "I'm (nonwhite race/ethnicity), but I'm light-skinned/white passing. Am I a person of color?"

A: Yes, just please recognize your privilege for being light-skinned/white passing and the benefits that affords you over darker-skinned people.

Q: "ur mean to white ppl ur the cause of the probelm!!1 dnt fight hate with hate!!!!"

A: shut up.



Q: "Do you hate white people?"

A: Seriously? Is that all you got from our blog? We don't hate white people, **we hate white supremacy. We want to eradicate white supremacy.** Learn the difference.

A: "Why wasn't my question answered?"

Q:

- It has been answered in the FAQ, and ask tag. It is immensely frustrating to have people ask us the same questions without even bothering to look at the FAQ and ask tags when it says specifically on the ask link to look there first before asking. We delete questions that have been answered before.
- We're too busy, we have lives too.
- You can easily find the answer on Google.
- It was eaten by Tumblr.

Q: Do you know any blogs similar to yours?

A: Check our "Sisters" tag.

Q: "I'm a white person, and I was wondering if I can follow this blog."

A: You can follow this blog, but please don't tone police us and/or our posts.

Also, please use google before asking us general questions that can be easily googled. We aren't information boxes, and it's not our job to educate you. We're generally okay with answering questions you may have, but sometimes they get repetitive when we get 234 of the same question in one day.

Sisters Page (similar blogs)

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/Sisters%20>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR UNITED



A safe space for women of color. Our bodies are not land for colonialism. We're not going to perpetuate sexual stereotypes created by racist pornography. We're not uncivilized, hypersexualized, exotic women. Our voices WILL be heard and we WILL fight back. Contact: angrywocunited@gmail.com 2 Online Users



Questions? (Please read the FAQ before sending us questions. This is a WOC space. We won't answer questions from white people. We DON'T exclude white passing WOC or WOC with white European heritage from this blog.)

- [Submit](#)
- [Mods](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [About AWCU](#)
- [Sisters](#)
- [To White Men](#)
- [To White Women](#)
- [Archive](#)

THEME BY STJN

Sisters

- A**
- [Actresses of Color](#)
- [Alternative Girls of Colour](#)
- [Angry Asian Girls United](#)
- [Angry Black Girls United](#)
- [Angry Native Feminists](#)
- [Angry Taiwanese Girls United](#)
- [Asian Female Models](#)
- [Asian Women Body Rainbow](#)
- B**
- [Badass Women](#)
- [Bald Black Beauties](#)
- [BAMF Women of Color](#)
- [Beautiful Curfs](#)
- [Beso Del Sol](#)
- [Big Beautiful Black Girls](#)
- [Black and Curvy](#)
- [Black Girl Books](#)
- [Black Girls Killing It](#)
- [Black Women World History](#)
- [Brown Girls Help](#)
- [Body Posi Bikini Babes](#)
- C**
- [Chubby Bunnies](#)
- [Cine de America Latina](#)
- [Classic Ladies of Color](#)
- [Colorful Cuties](#)
- [Colour Girls with Ink](#)
- [Curves in Color](#)
- D**
- [Daily Fatpiration](#)
- [Diasporan Booty Shaking](#)
- [Disney for Princesses | Disney and Intersectionality](#)
- [Dolls of Color](#)
- E**
- F**
- [Fascinasians](#)
- [Fat Art](#)
- [Fat Brown Hijabis](#)
- [Fat Grrr Activism](#)
- [Fat Girls Are Fun](#)
- [Feminists of Color](#)
- [Fitness, Not Thinspo](#)
- [For Brown Girls](#)
- [Fuck NO! Fetishization](#)
- [Fuck Yea Badass Latinas](#)
- [Fuck Yeah Asian Dykes!](#)
- [Fuck Yeah Black Pinup Girls](#)
- [Fuck Yeah Dark Girls](#)
- [Fuck Yeah Desi Women](#)
- [Fuck Yeah Ethnic Women](#)
- [Fuck Yeah, Hard Femmel](#)
- [Fuck Yeah MTFs of Color](#)
- [Fuck Yeah, North African Women](#)

- [Fuck Yeah, Xicana Power!](#)
- G**
- [Gradient Lair](#)
- H**
- I**
- [Intersectional Feminism](#)
- J**
- K**
- [Korra is Not Tan](#)
- L**
- [Lati-negr@s](#)
- [Latinattack the Status Quo](#)
- [Latinas Are Not A Fetish](#)
- [Latina Nerds Unite](#)
- M**
- [Models of Color](#)
- [Modest and Fabulous](#)
- [El Movimiento Chicano](#)
- [Muslim Women in History](#)
- N**
- [Native Women Rock](#)
- [Natural Hair Everything](#)
- [Natya](#)
- [North African Models](#)
- O**
- [Oppressed Brown Girls Doing Things](#)
- P**
- [PoC With Disabilities](#)
- [Pretty Black Pastel](#)
- Q**
- [Queer Women of Color | The Triple Minority](#)
- [Qwear | Fashion Blog](#)
- R**
- [Reclaiming the Latina Tag](#)
- [Redefining Body Image](#)
- S**
- [Shameless Brown Girls](#)
- T**
- [This is Not Africa](#)
- [This is Not India](#)
- [This is Not Japan](#)
- [This is Not Korea](#)
- [This Is Not Latin@!](#)
- [This is Not Native](#)
- [This is Not Pinoy](#)
- [This is Not Roman!](#)
- U**
- V**
- [Vintage Black Glamour](#)
- W**
- [Who Runs the World? Big Girls](#)
- [Woc in Solidarity](#)
- [WoC Recovery](#)
- [The Women of Color Survival Kit](#)
- X**
- Y**
- [You are Not Desi](#)

To White Men

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/to%20white%20men>

(This page is a GIF of fake crying)

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR
UNITED



To White Women

<http://angrywocunited.tumblr.com/towhitewomen>

ANGRY WOMEN OF COLOR
UNITED



To White Women

- We will not entertain any submissions and/or questions from white women, **this is a safe space for women of color**. Questions from white women will be ignored and/or deleted. Failure to comply to this particular rule will result in mortification meaning we'll embarrass and berate you for invading our space.
- This isn't a place for you to dissertate your experiences as a white woman, and to showcase your "white guilt". Do not message us claiming how wish you were a Black, Asian, Hispanic etc. woman because your whiteness is boring, you only desire the positive aspects of being a woman or color while deliberately disregarding the negative aspects.
- While reblogging posts about women of color from this blog, do not insert your tone policing commentary
- This blog wasn't established to educate you, you have access to Google, bookstores, the library or you can browse our resource page.
- We appreciate your compliments but they will not be published on our blog. We'll answer privately.

APPENDIX C: This Is Not Pilipinx

All images dated from May 2nd 2016.

Front Page

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com>



HOME MESSAGE ABOUT ADMINS & MODS FAQs TAGS THEME

MAY 02 2016, 01:52 PM
129 NOTES • VIA: PINAYMERMAID-QUEENOFMIRKWOOD • SOURCE: PINOY-CULTURE

balmesza: Did we have any pre-colonial number systems?

pinoy-culture:

Yes we did! You can find more information on all about that on these following articles by Philippine Studies published by Ateneo de Manila University.

- Counting and Marking Time: From the Precolonial to the Contemporary Tagalog World by Damon L. Woods
- Mathematical Ideas in Early Philippine Society by Ricardo Manapat

MAY 02 2016, 01:40 PM
12 NOTES • VIA: PAG-ASAHARIBON • SOURCE: PAG-ASAHARIBON

Filipino Heritage District in SF takes next step to...

This is *NOT* Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49762 visits

1 visitor

TINF is against fetishization, racism, and cultural appropriation of Pilipinx people and cultures.

Please check through our links if you want to know more.

PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

Pilipinx Face Appreciation Day (PFAD) is held every 12th of the month. For more information, please see the link below.

OTHER LINKS

Submit Page

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/contact>

PLEASE READ THROUGH ALL THE LINKS AND FAQ AND ALSO, PLEASE DO NOT SEND US FANMAIL. FOR NOW, ANONYMOUS QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN TURNED OFF.

[Login](#) or [sign up](#) for Tumblr to ask a question

SUBMIT

PLEASE READ THROUGH OUR FAQ/LINKS/AND GUIDELINES BEFORE SUBMITTING.

1. If you are white, your submission will be deleted and especially if it's something fetishizing, derogatory, or racist towards Pilipinx people.
2. We ask that if you want to submit something NSFW (like a selfie or a photo showing nudity) that you tag it both in the post and in the tags itself, as well as an age. We will not post anything from our underaged followers which is under 18 years old. Our followers may range in all ages and it ensures that if they have a blacklist to block that post. We also ask that if it is personal/NSFW that it is tasteful and nothing to explicit otherwise we might not post it.
3. You are welcome to submit personal stories, selfies, resources, videos, links, and anything that is about your identity and experience as a Pilipinx. The length does not matter and I'm not sure if Tumblr has a limit to how much you can post.
4. If there is anything triggering please add that to the top post as well. (ex: "abuse cw" or "abuse tw") You do not need to add a read more unless you want to and this helps readers who might feel strongly towards that topic to steer away from it if needed be.

Text	<input type="text" value="Name (required)"/>	<input type="text" value="Email (required)"/>
Title <small>Optional</small>		
<p>B / I / S / P / Q / L / R / G / H / J / K / L / M / N / O / P / Q / R / S / T / U / V / W / X / Y / Z / 0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / +</p>		
Tags: <input type="checkbox"/> DO NOT REBLOG <input type="checkbox"/> pilipinx face appreciation day <input type="checkbox"/> PFAD		
<input type="checkbox"/> pilipinx <input type="checkbox"/> filipinx <input type="checkbox"/> fil am <input type="checkbox"/> fil can <input type="checkbox"/> diaspora		
<input type="checkbox"/> diasporic pilipinx <input type="checkbox"/> diasporic filipinx <input type="checkbox"/> personal <input type="checkbox"/> venting		
<input type="checkbox"/> achievements <input type="checkbox"/> self love <input type="checkbox"/> brown pride <input type="checkbox"/> brown love <input type="checkbox"/> link		
<input type="checkbox"/> video <input type="checkbox"/> pamilya <input type="checkbox"/> pilipinx solidarity <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> nswf		
<input type="checkbox"/> pilipinx pride <input type="checkbox"/> filipinx pride <input type="checkbox"/> austronesian <input type="checkbox"/> pilipinx power		
<input type="checkbox"/> long post <input type="checkbox"/> queer <input type="checkbox"/> queer pilipinx <input type="checkbox"/> trans filipinx		
<input type="checkbox"/> I accept the Terms of Submission		<input type="submit" value="Submit"/>

This is **NOT** Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49765 visits

3 visitors

TINP is against fetishization, racism, and cultural appropriation of Pilipinx people and cultures.

Please check through our links if you want to know more.

PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

Pilipinx Face Appreciation Day (PFAD) is held every 12th of the month. For more information, please see the link below.

OTHER LINKS

[Resources](#)

[PFAD](#)

About Page

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/about>

ABOUT

About TINP:

This blog is inspired both by [pinoy-culture](#) and [thisisnotpinoy](#). The latter hadn't posted in a few months and with so much more interest happening in the Pilipinx community, V decided there was more than enough time waiting and created TINP.

This blog is meant to serve all Pilipinx people of all or no genders, of all or no sexes, no matter where you live on planet Earth, for the diasporic, for those who are struggling with their identities and for those who embrace it, it is a place to share stories and personal experiences of being Pilipinx, resources to better our people or to inform us, it is a place to write all your frustrations, your joys, your achievements, and the oppressions that you have ever faced while being Pilipinx.

All of the content that is on this blog is a mixture between submissions for people in the community, from the mods and admins, and reblogs of things from other users on Tumblr.

Disclaimer: I'd also like to add that there may come issues or events that may be written incorrectly or full of bias. The mods and admins of this blog will do our best to correct ourselves if that issue ever arises and not to do it again. We are all prone to mistakes and will offer apologies when we are held accountable. Accountability and checking ourselves is important to our own well-beings and to the community that follows us.

To White Followers:

This space is not for you. You can reblog, you can like posts, but ultimately, the stories our community shares, the experiences we have being Pilipinx, and the blog that all this encompasses is something you will never understand. If you come to this place saying anything racist, anything that fetishizes Pilipinx people, or you think you honestly know better just because you have family who is Pilipinx or a significant other who is Pilipinx, you will be ignored. Your messages will be deleted and the mods and admins will not have to deal with you. Of course, if you persist and truly want to embarrass yourself in front of our followers then be our guest.

Even for white followers who have the best of intentions, we will not post your ask/submission and may reply to you privately. This blog is meant for Pilipinx people and our voices. You have plenty of spaces, plenty of voices to back you up. Clearly there are whole systems that support you and your beliefs.

This is *NOT* Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49766 visits

3 visitors

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PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

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OTHER LINKS

[Resources](#)

[PFAD](#)

Admin & Moderators

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/team>

This is your TIN(a)P(ay) team! We are composed of 6 remarkable individuals!

Admins:

Venus

21
fil am (tagalog/ilocanx/itneg)
they/them/theirs
women/gender studies major

Lotus

19
fil am (tagalog/bisaya) / black
they/them/theirs
art student in community college

Kim Celine

20
generation 1.5 | fil am (bicol) | fluent in Bicol & Tagalog
she/her
sociology major, former pre-nursing student

Irina

22
gen 1.5 | fil am (quezon province) | fluent in tagalog
they/them

Bianca

20
filipinx/german (tagalog/ilocanx/kankana-ey)
ae/aers or she/hers
history major, studying art history and international affairs

Colette

20
1.5 gen
filipina (ilocano/ilonggo)
she/her
psychology major

This is *NOT* Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49767 visits

3 visitors

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PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

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OTHER LINKS

[Resources](#) [PFAD](#)

FAQ Page

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/faqs>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why "Pilipinx" and not Pilipin@ or Filipin@?

- There is a short version about the Pilipinx language itself that can be discussed another time. The long version: "F" (along with C, N, J, Q, V, X, and Z) did not exist in the native script of the Philippines (known as baybayin)—long before Spanish influence and rule. As a means to decolonize ourselves and way of thinking, most things will be spelled as they are according to this notion. As for the @, it basically says that there are only Pilipino/Pilipina people and no other gender. "X" is gender neutral and encompasses all genders that Pilipinx people are.
- You can still use Filipinx! F/P are interchangeable.

How do you pronounce "Pilipinx/Pinxy"?

- According to Latinx communities, they say "Latin-x" so I believe it would be "Pi-li-pin-x" or "Pi-li-pinks" and "Pink-sy" maybe? Pilipinx/Pinxy was geared more towards written form than spoken, but this is the way I'd say them!

Are Pilipinxs considered Asian or Pacific Islanders/Polynesian?

- The short answer: we are considered Southeast Asian. The long answer: [written here](#) by pinoy-culture.

I am white/non-Pilipinx, can I submit/reblog/like posts?

- You can reblog and like but if you submit there is no guarantee it will be posted. This is a space *FOR PILIPINX PEOPLE!*

What is utak kolonyal (colonial mentality)?

- [Check thisisnotpinoy's definition here.](#)

What is PFAD (Pilipinx Face Appreciation Day) and can I participate?

- Please refer to [this page](#) as well as the [rebloggable version](#).

I want to learn [Tagalog/Ilocano/Cebuano/Bisayan/etc.]. Do you have any resources?

- Resources for Filipino languages are scarce if they aren't from the Philippines itself or through Amazon where you have to pay. Whatever you search on Google is what we'll link to you until we compile a more suitable list of learning places online. Until then, search up songs in those languages, as Admin Kim Celine has suggested.

What is your opinion on how [xyz] identifies? (Can I call myself [xyz] even though I'm [abc] ((or something of this variation...)))

- The TINP team is not here to police your identity in any way. If you are Pilipinx, you are Pilipinx. However, the only thing to note is that if you have privileges in any other way, as with any other privilege, that you check yourselves before you speak out on certain matters. For example: indigenous Pilipinxs (such as Austronesian and Aeta people) are still very much overshadowed by Pilipinxs who have some Spanish/European/American ancestry, who have some Chinese/Japanese/Korean ancestry, and even Pilipinx nationals who are not ethnically Pilipinx. As a whole, while Pilipinxs come in many shapes, sizes, colors—there is still a lot in our communities that have yet to be addressed or how to address it. We all still have a lot to discuss and heal from. We are only here to push forwards the conversation, not be a marker of "yes" or "no" or "maybe". Ultimately, your identity is yours alone and not for anyone on our team to decide for you.

More will be added in the future.

This is *NOT* Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49768 visits

3 visitors

TINP is against fetishization, racism, and cultural appropriation of Pilipinx people and cultures.

Please check through our links if you want to know more.

PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

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OTHER LINKS

[Resources](#)

[PFAD](#)

Resources Page

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/resources>

Pilipinx Blogs:

- [austro-nesian](#)
- [atopilipinas](#)
- [filipinomaritalheritage](#)
- [fyfilipinoprde](#)
- [indiohistorian](#)
- [litratonjuan](#)
- [lost in the philippines](#)
- [pag-asaharibon](#)
- [pananamit](#)
- [pinoycuisine](#)
- [pinoy-culture](#)
- [thisisnotpinoy](#)

This post is of [Filipinx bloggers on Tumblr](#) and their interests are listed in the tag! Simply reblog/like or save it in your drafts to see and quickly add fellow Filipinxs.

Other Cultural or Ethnic Solidarity Blogs:

- [angryasiangirlsunited](#)
- [angrylatinxunited](#)
- [brownpeopleproblems](#)
- [feministwomenofcolor](#)
- [fucknofetishization](#)
- [southeastasianists](#)
- [thisisantiasianracism](#)
- [this-is-not-hawaiian](#)
- [thisisnotlatinx](#)
- [thisiswhiteprivilege](#)
- [weareallmixedup](#)
- [whitepeoplestealingculture](#)

This is *NOT* Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49770 visits

3 visitors

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Please check through our links if you want to know more.

PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

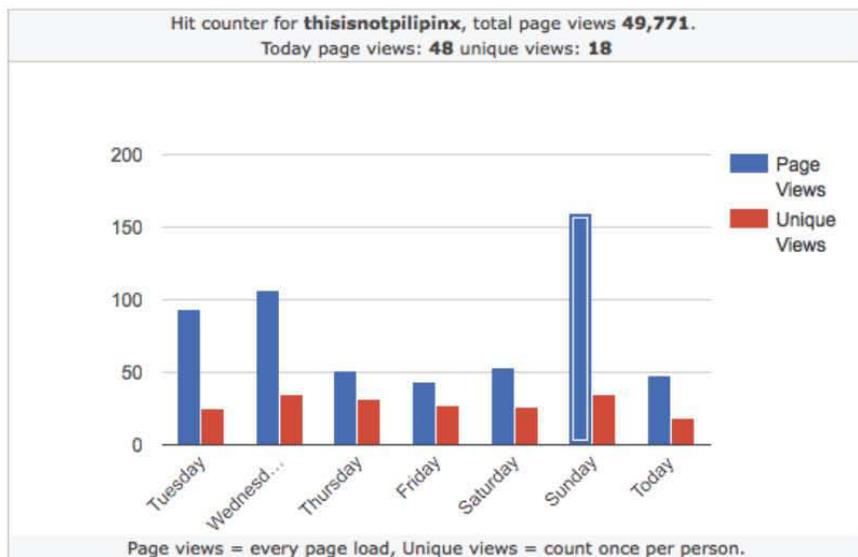
Pilipinx Face Appreciation Day (PFAD) is held every 12th of the month. For more information, please see the link below.

OTHER LINKS

[Resources](#) [PFAD](#)

Page Views

<http://freehostedscripts.net/hc.php?id=Mjg4MDk1MHx0aG1zaXNub3RwaWxpcGlueC50dW1ibHfuY29tfDE=>



Pilipinx Face Appreciation Day

<http://thisisnotpilipinx.tumblr.com/pfad>

PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY!

[Click this for the rebloggable version.](#)

PFAD is a day to celebrate the various faces that Pilipinx people are. It is held every **12th of the month**, in recognition of the Philippine Declaration of Independence (June 12th, 1898).

Important information on submission:

- As long as you are Pilipinx, you can submit. Whether this means you're half, mixed, or full—we will accept everyone and anyone who is Pilipinx.
- We encourage that you share your stories in the caption. If there is any potentially triggering content, we ask that you mark it as such (example: "content/trigger warning: suicide mention, eating disorders" or anything like that). When the admins see the posts, we will add the triggers in the tag section as well to ensure that anyone who has blacklisted those tags will not see it.
- We ask that you don't submit anything too NSFW as we may have younger audiences viewing. **Please note that if you are younger than 18 years old and attempt to submit a NSFW image, we will immediately delete the post. Don't submit NSFW images if you are underaged, please and thank you.**
- If your selfie hasn't been posted, it probably hasn't been posted by our team or it hasn't gotten through. Don't be afraid to submit it twice if you think it didn't go through!
- PFAD is inspired by [angryasiangirlunited](#)'s monthly Asian Face Appreciation Day (AFAD). We host this every month in hopes of celebrating all Pilipinxs. We have gotten a couple asks here and there saying that we might be copying #BlackOut and this is simply not true. The movements are very different and we are by no means trying to overshadow black people and the message they are trying to send via #BlackOut.

[If you need help with submitting a photo click here!](#)

This is *NOT* Pilipinx

WHO WE ARE

49796 visits

1 visitor

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PILIPINX FACE APPRECIATION DAY

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OTHER LINKS

[Resources](#)

[PFAD](#)

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IMAGES

Page 3 <http://frejoles.tumblr.com/post/126072487445/i-will-fucking-break-ur-ankles-if-u-call-me-a>

Page 4 <http://white-people-be-like.tumblr.com/post/123633303580/dreamybrowngirl-can-we-talk-about-something>

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