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Naming Experience: Registering Resistance and Mobilizing Change with Qualitative Tools

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Introduction

With the continued development and widespread use of data in a variety of institutional and professional settings, data is increasingly accepted in various circumstances as objectively and appropriately portraying a set of events, identities or phenomena. This ideology surrounding data is seen in the rise of data visualization use, ‘big data’-backed studies, statistical analyses and more. While such representations of data often contribute to helpful and informative understandings of certain phenomena, they often provide a distorted vision of the incidents they represent. Scholars at the intersection of data and society frequently express the idea that data is not an infallible and entirely objective presentation of reality, but rather a tool of expression with power and influence dependent on societal contexts (Bowker, 2007; Boyd & Crawford, 2011; Rosenberg & Gitelman, 2013; Kitchin, 2014; Dalton & Thatcher, 2014). These authors’ discussions center on the understanding of data as existing within a cycle of production and reception, with respect to a spectrum of varied contextual factors. An important example of this specific understanding of data includes work questioning the ‘comprehensive’ data on police officer-involved homicides, revealed by Fischer-Baum (2014), McCarthy (2015), Currie et. al. (2016), among others, combined with activist data leaks from Edward Snowden and Julian Assange.

This body of work highlights that there are ongoing problems in the considerations of power related to the U.S. government’s data transparency efforts. Problems exist not only in making data available to the public to improve government accountability, but also in communicating how and why data on citizens is captured, collected, cleaned and stored, to whom and how this information is disseminated and for what reasons. This idea is central to the field of critical data studies, where the terms of production and reception of data are emphasized as substantial components of the broader analysis and use of data for promoting findings or drawing conclusions in a variety of disciplines.

The project proposed here aims to employ the aforementioned concepts for using and analyzing data, and builds on the claim that not all data collection accurately represents the phenomena it seeks to. This assertion draws from the authors’ previous work conducted on police-officer involved homicide (POIH) data, which investigated the state of collected data on POIH incidents in Los Angeles County and explored ways to use action research to include the participation of individuals affected by the collection of such data into the process of its curation and dissemination. In this project, we found that some of the best data on the subject was produced by local activist groups and news organizations with fewer resources than official federal and municipal entities (Currie et al., 2016).

We attributed this finding to the expressed vested interest, personal connection, and more in-depth knowledge in and of the communities that these organizations hold over other, more removed agencies with ‘official’ statistics. In addition, the outcomes of this project included findings of various facets of data that change based on context. In the case of data in Los Angeles County, we observed differences of transparency, semantics and granularity of POIH data captured at various levels of self-organization or grassroots levels and through levels of municipal state or federal government entities as a result of the underlying values of the organization as well as the datasets’ position in political, economic, social and institutional assemblages of support (Currie et al., 2016). The differences in status of these factors created a different set of outcomes in terms of production and reception of the data, which proved crucial in determining and identifying ways in which gaps in the data persisted, as well as roles for
community members and interested stakeholders to aid in providing alternate presentations and understandings of the data. President Obama’s Police Data Initiative (PDI) is a recent step towards remedying only the issues with providing data for government accountability, and even then, official information on such killings remains fragmentary and difficult to find (Smith & Austin, 2015). Moreover, as the new administration comes into office, the future function of the PDI is unclear. The public outcry related to these deaths combined with the realization that there were no official data nor statistics to back up the stories expressed by certain communities for years, brought attention to the pervasiveness of systemic racism still afoot in the U.S., as well as how data is understood as a form of power.

The seriousness of and the importance afforded to data highlight the necessity to supplement official statistics collected with qualitative nuance. This has been echoed recently in many popular press articles that speak out against the importance placed on local and state governments’ statistics and data sets on police homicide and police brutality. Many members of the communities affected by police violence often ask why their own stories are not enough, and why, for example, independent organizations should need to verify the antagonism of their daily experience with law enforcement. These issues come into play for this particular project in regards to various reports our project team heard in the past months of police harassment of students and faculty at UCLA. We heard examples of enrolled students being stopped and questioned repeatedly on grounds of suspicion, as well as an anecdote given by a male African American professor of being followed by UCLA PD into his office. These reports build on an uncomfortable history. For example in 2006 UCLA PD tasing of Muslim-American student for not showing his BruinCard, which was recorded by other students’ phones and made a compelling case for racial profiling and excessive use of force by UCLA PD (Glover, 2007). Moreover, UCLA PD is a jurisdiction of UC PD, a statewide governmental agency that operates much like the California Highway Patrol, that engages in community policing and is lauded for being one of the best in the country. As they welcome community feedback for their work, we argue that there should be more platforms that UCLA PD does not control for this to occur.

Many of the individuals we interacted with expressed that they have rich personal narratives they are willing to share with regard to their experiences with police harassment as students, faculty or staff at UCLA, but feel they have few spaces to adequately air their concerns or channel them into productive and positive methods for change. To our current knowledge, any information collected on such incidents in this specific realm is sparse and inactive. This presents the significance of putting into practice the types of more complex and nuanced collection, analysis, and dissemination of data advocated for by scholars of critical data studies and elsewhere. This paper reviews literature in fields of critical race theory and legal storytelling methods, legal studies regarding digital documents and data, as well as information and archival studies’ practices of data management for social justice to conceptualize a project that will tackle the issue of police harassment of students, faculty and staff at UCLA. The paper lays out the important considerations necessary for the creation of a mobile application for reporting such incidents in a way that is easily accessible, understood and utilized by people on the UCLA campus, and that facilitates collection and dissemination of narratives detailing such incidents as a way to channel such expressions and reach out to others that may have been affected but lack the proper resources to seek action.

Linking Data to Power
We draw from relevant literature in the areas of legal storytelling, critical race theory and legal studies regarding data management to build a theoretical basis for the design and dissemination of a reporting tool. The works we present in this section show how concepts of “data” relate to the legitimization and power of personal experience. The legal storytelling section will describe how the process of storytelling and sharing personal narratives matters in processes of accountability and legitimacy. We draw from legal literature as it relates to police harassment and violence to construct an argument around how data acts as and is used as evidence in a variety of contexts. Finally, the section on data management asks how we might incorporate issues of social justice into the schema of data management for this particular application. Each of the elements will be crucial pieces to consider in the planning, designing and building of the UCLA police harassment reporting app.

**Legal Storytelling Literature: Why are narratives important?**

In light of recent events that suggest law enforcement training and practices should be rethought, and the realization that in part, there is very little data to hold police accountable, critics of using data to expose these practices have been pushing back, stating, for example:

> Statistics should be considered a technology of mistrust—statistics are used when personal experience is in doubt because the analyst has no intimate knowledge of it. Statistics are consistently used as a technology of the educated elite to discuss the lower classes and subaltern populations, those individuals that are considered unknowable and untrustworthy of delivering their own accounts of their daily life. A demand for statistical proof is blatant distrust of someone’s lived experience. The very demand for statistical proof is otherizing because it defines the subject as an outsider, not worthy of the benefit of the doubt (Lanius, 2015).

Our previous work deals with who has the authority to collect and classify data in these situations, as well as how it is disseminated and described and the values underlying these endeavors (Currie et al., 2015; Currie et al., 2016). In this previous work, we noted a significant gap in the ability of those most affected by the creation and dissemination of data in holding positions of power, agency or authority over processes involving data. Additionally, we described a variety of differences in the measurement and consideration of attributes of data such as scale, granularity and semantics that greatly affect the consistency and breadth with which data can be appropriately created, collected, interpreted and understood. Though we do not mean to wholly discredit the value and often necessity of statistical data and tools, we advocate for a more nuanced understanding of its contextual constraints and the power dynamics and perspectives at play in its creation and use.

The aim of this work draws from our previous work but is distinct. With this project, we hope to develop new ways that information can be provided to effective arenas for social change, knowing full well that policy is based not just on numbers but also on discourse, which is shaped by stories. We draw from legal scholar Patricia J. Williams’ *Alchemy of Race and Rights* to inform a portion of the project. In this work, Williams recognizes that legal writing presumes a modernist take on data as a tool for deductive empiricism in the rational paradigm of evidence. She suggests employment of a dynamic inductive empiricism that more closely aligns with systems theory to look not just at legal documents, or data, but also the disciplines that determine evidence, their practices, and assumptions (p. 7). In this encapsulation, Williams describes the type of work our research team has done that has informed our present goals. It also provides ways ahead in considering how to collect qualitative data that systematically investigates the
gaps of legal data as such, as well as how the performance and practice of law disenfranchises
groups of people.

The areas of legal storytelling and critical race studies are additionally informative for
our goals. One formative work in this interstitial area of scholarship is Gloria Anzaldúa’s 1987
*Fronteras/Borderlands*, which suggests scholars find new ways to rewrite histories that are more
sensitive to race, class, gender and ethnicity as categories of analysis that recognize the positions
of *in-betweenness* in lived experience. This work explores “borderland worlds of ethnic
communities and academies” (Anzaldúa, 1987). It also examines social issues such as race, class
and sexual difference as intertwined with the narrative and poetic elements of a text, elements in
which theory is embedded. An example of Anzaldúa’s suggestion in action is Delgado’s *Rodrigo
Chronicles*. Delgado’s (1996) work is a fictional Socratic dialogue of intellectual equals, a battle-
worn civil rights academic and a young black man with a law degree from Italy. They discuss
many issues such as the myth of equal opportunity, neutral hiring and a liberal democratic
posturing that feigns majority interest in minority issues. They establish that minority members
should be given not just a representative ‘seat at the table’ in important discussions that lead to
decisions that cut across racial lines, but that minority perspectives should be included
meaningfully in all serious decisions regarding policy in a number of institutions. They discuss
the reasons that the majority has what theorist George Lipsitz (1995) would call a collective
‘possessive investment’ in their power and that through thinly veiled policies that seem to protect
or expand minority rights in society, they in many cases from policing to institutional Equal
Opportunity doctrines reflect and maintain deep seated racial prejudices.

In Delgado and Stefancic’s (2012) *Critical Race Theory Reader*, the authors draw upon a
rich body of literature that includes, among others, M.S. Ball’s (1989) “Stories of Origin and
Constitutional Possibilities,” Anzaldúa’s (1987) *Borderlands*, as well as Derrick Bell’s work
experiences of intersectionality in the 1980s and 90s to define storytelling/counter-storytelling
and “naming one's own reality” (Delgado, 1996). Critical race theorists consider that a principal
obstacle to racial reform is majoritarian mindset—the bundle of presuppositions, received
wisdoms and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant group bring to discussions
of race. This is similar to what Foucault would determine as the power/knowledge complex and
what legal scholar Michael K. Brown and information theorist Hope Olson would call “the
power to name” (Olson, 2001; Brown et al., 2003) which refers to the situation that those in
power are able to categorize people, behavior and practices, then doubly benefit from those
classifications. According to Delgado and Stefancic, in order to “analyze and challenge these
power-laden beliefs, writers can employ counter-stories, parables, chronicles, and anecdotes
aimed at revealing their contingency, cruelty, and self-serving nature” (1993, p. 1).

Deriving in part from Anzaldúa’s seminal *Borderlands* and Delgado and Stefancic’s work
above, authors Solórzano and Yosso (2002) develop a critical race methodology, which they
define as an approach to research that attends closely to race, racism and intersectionality with
gender and class in all aspects of the research process and highlights how these categories are
related to the experiences of people of color. This method understands these experiences as
sources of strength and draws from an interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies,
women's studies, sociology, history, humanities and the law to better understand lived
experience. This methodology seeks to provide an “oppositional reading” (Hall, 2001) to the
traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to understand and explain the experiences
of people of color. The goal of this methodology is to provide a liberatory or transformative
solution to racial, gender, and class subordination. These methods of understanding how and why narratives are important in promoting positive social change are core to the conceptualizing of our project, and will serve as key theoretical underpinnings for how we approach our research process.

Data, Documents and the Law: How is data evidence?

Data has been called upon as forensic evidence that encapsulates true processes of the world, both for state and activist purposes (Desrosières & Naish, 2002; Bruno et al., 2014; Hacking, 1987). Diplomats scholar Luciana Duranti’s frames the forensic, revelatory qualities of objectively collected data and calls for careful treatment of data to ensure authenticity and reliability of digital documents as evidence and to ward off politicization of the data and data managers. She problematizes contemporary capture, maintenance and use of this digital evidence:

The easiness of electronic records creation and the level of autonomy that it has provided to records creators, coupled with an exhilarating sense of freedom from the chains of bureaucratic structures, procedures, and forms, have produced the sloppiest records creation ever in the history of record making (Caswell, 2009, p. 139; Duranti, 1995, p. 9). Thus, Duranti argues that while digital documents she refers to as “electronic records” seem less complicated than their analog counterparts, it is because there is less oversight in the description, storage and retrieval of these electronic records. These records are cataloged and assigned metadata, or contextual descriptions of data, (Gilliland, 2008, p. 1) with a similar lack of care. Duranti builds on this claim through her argument that just because electronic records are authentic, does not mean they are reliable (Duranti, 1995, p. 9). According to Duranti, “the degree of completeness and degree of control of the procedure of creation are the only two factors that determine the reliability of records” (1995, emphasis added). It is the degree of the authenticity of a record that relates to the transmission of a record in a phase of development—whether in its state at transmission, a record is a draft, an original or a copy.

The process of establishing authenticity and reliability of electronic records is key to the ways in which data and statistics like the ones of interest to this paper gain legitimacy and authority among governing institutions and the public. Discussing the theoretical underpinnings of the processes of authenticity and reliability at the heart of this acceptance of data as evidence is significant for creating an application that adequately considers these concepts to use data in a way that best serves those most affected. The police harassment reports being handled in the proposed reporting app will act as evidence within that space, and thus the application will need to appropriately support the recognition of authenticity and reliability in the reports.

Archival theorist Michelle Caswell (2009) explored concepts of authenticity and reliability of electronic records in a study. In this study, she found that archivists Tom Scheinfeldt and Grace Lille, at the September 11 Archive and the Witness Media Archive, respectively, determine authenticity of a cell phone record by consulting carefully and consistently collected metadata on any record. As Caswell aptly notes, “how these two repositories appraise and describe cell-phone-generated documents calls into question the traditional archival emphasis on authenticity and reliability” (2009, p. 144). Thus, in an archival context, one can understand how the forensics of the data might be considered in relation to the authenticity and reliability of the content of the data of a cell phone record. These notions of the possible evidentiary qualities of data are important elements to consider as we develop a systematic plan for management of the
data we intend to collect and share, especially as we hope that it will enact change, both through policy and through discourse.

Contemporary literature on the legal issues of mass digital storage (Terzian, 2014; Villasenor, 2011; Gruenspecht, 2010; Star & Bowker, 1999) claims that there is a high probability that records of any given document or piece of data can be traced through infrastructure to users. Both in the case of digital data stores held by users themselves and in the case of data stored by users with third parties, the extent of the subpoena power increasingly rests on the question of the necessary specificity of any given prosecutorial request for documents (Gruenspecht, 2010). As digital information is increasingly seen as useful in court cases, judicial bodies and commentators have suggested application of rules for analog documents to digital documents (Terzian, 2014). The court’s production of and access to these digital documents stored in a number of different ways have brought rigorous scrutiny to Fourth Amendment questions (Allen & Mace, 2003). Civil liberties groups have argued that the Constitution demands a probable cause standard for various kinds of digital information to be submitted to law enforcement, while public interest and industry coalitions have pushed for legislation to address the issue (Gruenspect, 2010). As one commentator has noted, “whereas the subpoena power is fairly narrow in traditional cases, in computer crime cases it is incredibly broad” (Balkin et al., 2007, p. 234; Gruenspecht, 2010).

An example of the Fourth and Fifth Amendment questions of tracing data to users can be found in an October 2015 case brought by the government to access Apple’s cell phone data. Apple cited Communications Assistance to Law Enforcement Act (CALEA), a 1994 law that compels “telecommunications carriers” to build “backdoors” into their systems so that police could more easily conduct surveillance on targets’ phones in real time (Landis & Howard Elbert, 2015). However, CALEA also decreed that companies providing “information services” need not design their networks and services so that the government can intercept communications. This specification becomes especially significant in circumstances where the government tries to render Apple a communication service when it wants data that Apple could access. This was highlighted in the recent San Bernardino case, but was subsequently circumvented (Chiu & Wilkinson, 2016).

This brief overview of the application of CALEA against Apple, however, demonstrates its many implications for the current information and technological landscape, including how to appropriately consider and develop systems for data management in relation to the evidentiary status of the data of cell phone records. There is no publicly-available information as to exactly how this data is managed at Apple and other related information and telecommunications organizations, so that when they do grant data to assist in sensitive scenarios described above, the data that they give up is authentic, or pertaining to some person or phenomenon and transmitted in a certain form, and reliable, the same data each time. The complex legal questions attached to San Bernardino and many others have cropped up in recent months, and will likely continue to pose problems until policy is enacted to address these issues. These thorny legal issues must be considered in developing a data management system for our proposed project.

How can we manage data in a way that promotes social justice?

While Duranti’s notion of archival evidence holds neutrality as essential in archival practices, and claims archivists must resist politicization, as described above, archival scholar Terry Cook (2001) challenges such notions and contends that archives and archivists are situated within a constellation of practices, social and legal requirements and are bound to systems of
politics and economics which makes it impossible for archives to be apolitical. This tension in archival studies with regard to social justice can also be seen in Jimerson’s (2009) Archival Power, as he claims that archives have political power because they can be considered evidence of any number of processes that can be used in shaping discourse. Archivist Andrew Flinn (2009) maintains that while this notion of the power of archives is unquestionable, practices that intend to democratize information and institutions are often doomed because one can never know what the medium or long-term fallout might be.

There are many cases in which data can be captured and saved indefinitely to the detriment of those on whom that data is collected. Jean-François Blanchette and Debora G. Johnson’s (2002) piece on data suggests that while some data is transient and changes over time, other types of data are saved and made permanent. The authors evoke particular cases in which “the right to be forgotten”(Ibid., p. 9) and “the social benefit of forgetting”(Ibid, p. 1) are necessary to institute at the level of data security practice. Similarly, Geoffrey Bowker and S. Leigh Star maintain that when databases involve sensitive private information, the “question is not what the state ‘knows’ about a particular individual, but what it can [know] should the need ever arise” (Star & Bowker, 1999, p. 30). This concept is similar to what critical urban geographer Rob Kitchin terms “control creep”(2014), or using privately collected data to make governance decisions it was not collected to make, can easily be transferred to the level of data that would be generated by our proposed app/tool. Kitchin also warns of “anticipatory governance” or the use of collected data to make predictions about how people might act to take legal action to foreclose possibilities for certain people or groups of people (Ibid).

In response to such concerns of anticipatory governance, shaping discourse and the right to be forgotten, we hope to propose a method for recording and managing data on police harassment in a way that appropriately considers these concerns and resists authoritative power dynamics to do so. We recognize that statistics and data collection are often an integral part of recognizing and addressing incidents of police harassment, and propose the application considered below as an example of informed approach to data management that seeks to navigate the concerns around institutional data and statistics currently in place. The proposed application responds to a variety of exposed incidents of police violence harassment against students in the UC system, including the more publicized cases of the UC Davis 2011 pepper spray incident and a 2006 tasering incident (Cherkis, 2011; Relations, 2009). Utilizing data through a reporting app enables long term and protected management of such incidents, and should be done in consultation with the concerns noted throughout the literature review.

To begin developing ways to appropriately consider how archives can be used for social justice, we draw from the work of archival scholar Anne J. Gilliland who proposes a process in archival science by which archival description reaches beyond those who own, collect or donate materials to recognize other individuals involved in the creation of the materials (Gilliland, 2012). An increasingly discussed approach, arising largely from archival work in post-colonial contexts as well as from the recent U.N. Declaration on Indigenous Rights, is to recognize these other parties as co-creators who have rights regarding implicated records and other archival holdings, including rights to determine, or have input on, archival description. An important term involved in this approach is the archival multiverse, or the concept that archives are instantiated in a system of infrastructure and that they are always changing, which implicates the notion that all data is political.

While our goal is not to develop archives, per se, the data that we are gathering, and the data management practices we are looking to develop fall closely in line with the aforementioned
thinking on archives and social justice. Based on the literature we have reviewed, we expect that construction and implementation of this tool will bring attention to and facilitate discussion and policy with regard to police harassment on campus.

**Research Questions**

Considering the elements brought to light in the above literature review, we pose the following research questions to guide the design of a UCLA police harassment reporting app, while appropriately addressing the elements of storytelling, legal literature, and data management:

- What are the ways in which the UCLA PD harasses people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with mental health issues and disabilities?

- What sorts of actions can be taken based on narrative data collected by a reporting tool to mitigate this harassment?

- How can we ensure that this data is transparent enough to be used effectively to promote a social justice agenda, and simultaneously not easily co-opted by those who wish to use this data to detract from a social justice agenda?

**Methods**

**Building a Reporting Application**

Our methodology will be primarily design-based, and will consist of creating a mobile app and aiding in its implementation across the UCLA campus. The app will be similar to that of ACLU’s Mobile Justice CA and New York apps, with reports considered as incident reports and intake forms. Names will be attached to intake form data, but are encrypted so that only lawyers can access the data with identifying information attached. In the next section we will describe in greater detail what we envision the application’s features and roles to be, and how it will be implemented in the specific context of UCLA. Our sample for this study will be a convenience sample of self-selecting students, faculty and staff, as anyone on campus who wishes to use the application after its release will be free to do so. Our data collection process will match up to this sample; we will analyze the data as it is entered into the application to draw conclusions on its use, effectiveness and role in the community.

**Concepts of Data Management for Social Justice in ACLU Apps**

Two examples we draw from to envision our tool and how the data on police harassment might be stored and used to promote social justice come from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The first example is ACLU’s Stop and Frisk Watch App, developed in 2012 by Jason Van Anden as a tripartite tool that features functions that record, listen and report incidents of police harassment (Mann, 2014). The Record component of the tool allows the user to capture audiovisual footage of an incident by pushing a trigger on the photo’s frame; when the video is stopped, a survey form opens in which the user can provide details about the incident. The footage and the survey go to the NYCLU, which is used to gather information on NYPD stop and frisk practices. The Listen function also alerts the user when people in their area are being stopped by police, which is especially useful for community groups that monitor police activity. The Report feature allows the user to describe the encounter they witnessed (Mann, 2014). This tool works using both an Android device or an iPhone.
The Stop and Frisk Watch App app’s settings also allow the user to input their name, phone number and email, but a disclaimer warns, “There may be situations where the NYCLU may be legally required to disclose this information, such as when the NYCLU receives a subpoena.” That concern is increasingly palpable as stories of surveillance and profiling of activists has been increasingly noted in conjunction with the Black Lives Matter Movement in the last year, and considering the rapidity with which data was extracted from the San Bernardino iPhone in February 2016 (Joseph, 2015; Chmielewski, 2016; Goodman, 2016; Parks, 2016). NYCLU communications director Jennifer Carnig states that the NYCLU “uses the videos we receive to put a face on what stop-and-frisk really looks like and to highlight how unjustified stops erode trust between the community and the police,” and that the information stored in the reports “will be used in press work, to lobby public officials, in public education, in advocacy and potentially in litigation” (Mann, 2014).

This is exactly the type of work that we wish to undertake with our tool, however, an app that does exactly this is not available outside of New York. The second tool under consideration as we conceptualize our own system is ACLU’s Mobile Justice CA app, which derives from Van Anden’s NYCLU app and came online in 2015. The app collects and stores video and written data submitted to the smartphone app with regard to police harassment in California. Similar to the NYCLUs Stop and Frisk Watch App, the Mobile Justice CA app is available in English and Spanish on both Android Devices and on Apple products. It incorporates the Record and Report components of the same sort as the NYCLU’s app, but does not leverage the Listen function. Mobile Justice CA also sends these videos and reports to the ACLU to be investigated. The data collected serves as a confidential client intake form. However, according to the California ACLU, “No legal action is taken by the ACLU, however, unless an explicit request is made, and the reports are treated as confidential and privileged legal communications. The videos, however, may be shared by the ACLU with the news media, community organizations or the general public to help call attention to police abuse” (Weiner, 2015).

As opposed to the NYCLU’s app, the Watch CA app is intended for use by users and witnesses directly interrogated by police. It does not, however, alert people who have the also downloaded the app and who are in immediate proximity to a report of harassment. It has the double utility of uploading all information submitted to the app, so that in cases in which law enforcement officers gain access into victims’ phones, the evidence is simultaneously, unbeknownst to the officers, uploaded to the ACLU’s repository. This addition is important because in recent months as the public demanded increased transparency and accountability, law enforcement has become keen to citizen use of cameras to document police activity and has adopted practices of taking phones and deleting recorded content of the encounter, such as in the case of LA resident Griffith Fuller Jr. stopped by a police officer for jaywalking at a West Hollywood intersection in November 2014. The 28-year-old man reported to multiple news sources that during the incident he felt unsafe and recorded the interaction with the officer. The officer then deleted the footage from both the “camera roll” and “recently deleted” folders of Fuller’s phone. If Fuller had the Watch CA app that night, “it wouldn’t have been his word [the officer’s] against mine. It would have been backed up and archived” (Irick & Tokumatsu, 2015; Fuller, 2015). This innovation of the Watch CA app to directly upload from the recording feature is one that proves instructive for the development of our tool.

Despite many similarities in goals and functions, the tool we envision is distinct from the ACLU’s CA Watch app in the information it records and the jurisdiction it serves. The ACLU’s Mobile Justice CA app already collects police harassment data for all of the state of California,
including Los Angeles. UCLA, though a California state institution, also has its own distinct police force which operates with the UCPD as a statewide jurisdiction, and as such, is not as easily subject to public scrutiny and accountability. Most of the accountability would ideally originate from community reports, internal review, and through partnerships with other UCLA-based academic organizations (“UCLA Police Department Policies,” 2016). However, outside accountability for UCLA PD also crucial. We hope to start to fill this crucial gap with this application.

Our app will record video and audio of incidents, as well as send alerts to others in the area, then send data to the ACLU. The alert function is a useful one for our project, as UCLA is a relatively small area; if individuals on campus are able to physically witness events of harassment, it would serve to increase awareness among the student body, faculty and staff, as well as hold law enforcement accountable by having the public present. In conjunction with Gilliland’s notion of co-creator rights, we give respondents the opportunity add more curated narrative information in addition to reporting incidents of UCLA PD harassment, which will be housed on a website that works in concert with the project. As Gilliland notes that co-creators should be able to have some say over their contribution, our planned practice of giving users a choice in how to document their experience of harassment by law enforcement is an improvement over the stated functions of the use of such videos to promote public awareness in both of the ACLU apps discussed.

The voluntary reporting or storytelling component of the video would be included as part of the initial report, through a feature where the reporter would choose whether or not they would like to share their story. Those reporting are given the opportunity to submit a written statement or audio clip to be included on the website’s portal that displays these stories. We would view each of these submissions to ensure that there is no information included that should be kept confidential for the safety of the reporter. As these written statements or audio clips would be submitted to us, we would keep them first on a private server, then upload them to a separate server that houses the website in order to keep the reporter’s information as confidential as possible. As highlighted in the legal storytelling and critical race theory portion of the literature review, there are distinct advantages of letting people tell their story of encounters with racism and intersectional politics. This dissemination of stories would allow reporters a venue to meaningfully “name their experiences.” We hope that disseminating these stories would move beyond a mere numerical representation of data collected from people of color, as well as disabled and LGBTQ individuals’ experience with UCLA PD towards an affordance of power in the articulation of these incidents. These inclusion of stories in a public forum can shape discourse on the situation of harassment of marginalized individuals and groups by UCLA PD, and may ideally inspire a push towards more just and ethical training and policing practices.

Additionally, as we are sending documents to the ACLU, we must take seriously the issues connected to the evidentiary status of the data collected, and foreclose possibilities for the data to be used against those reporting, as well as against control creep or anticipatory governance. For this we envision that the application’s information would all be encrypted and sent to the ACLU, then decrypted on their end. The encrypted data of the reports would file into tabular spreadsheets with the name of the officer, the person reporting, the location, the time, written details of the event and the audiovisual footage. ACLU lawyers could decrypt this data as they are working on these cases and monitoring police activity at UCLA. The data of the reports would serve as client intake forms, similar to their treatment within the ACLU Stop and Frisk App, and would thus resist subpoena by courts.
Hypotheses

In conjunction with the research we have done on POIH data, we expect that many of the stories we have already heard in relation to harassment and profiling of students, staff and faculty of color, the data that people voluntarily upload will begin to show the extent to which this happens on UCLA campus. We will learn the practices, tactics and strategies used by police to carry out these activities, as well as begin to understand the ways in which people who are subject to these strategies try to avoid them or counteract them. We hope this proposal will inform the development of a useful tool for those who undertake in the latter. The reports gathered by this tool will also shed light on to the particular practices undertaken by police to harass people of color on campus so that policies might be enacted to stop these types of practices.

Drawing from the literature on legal storytelling, we hope that providing an outlet for stories to be made public in the right scenarios can be beneficial for those experiencing harassment by accessing legal representation, and countering the system to bring about policy change. As these stories are made available, they will ideally contribute to changing discourse. We will draw from the data management literature from information and archival studies that encourages justice, as well as gather lessons from the ACLU’s app for data collection on police practices in California to understand how to make sure this data achieves its goals of enacting meaningful social change.

Conclusion

The design and implementation of this app that allows people to upload data and stories of police harassment on the UCLA campus will begin to show the extent to which these types of incidents happen in this particular area. These reports will be stored, edited and displayed on a website, while ensuring the confidentiality of the reporters. Drawing from the literature on legal storytelling, we hope that providing an outlet for stories to be made public in the right scenarios can be beneficial for those experiencing harassment by accessing legal representation, countering the system to bring about policy change, making some stories available, and contributing to changing discourse. We have consulted data management literature from information and archival studies that encourage justice, and have gathered lessons from the ACLU’s apps for holding law enforcement accountable to understand how to make sure this data achieves its goals of enacting meaningful social change. Based on what we have outlined in the literature review, we have set forth theoretical frame to guide the development of a mobile app similar to that of ACLU’s Stop and Frisk Watch App to allow people on campus to record incidents of harassment. Identifying information will be attached to intake form data, but will encrypted so that only lawyers can access the data with identifying information attached. The reports gathered by this tool will importantly uncover and bring to the fore the particular ways in which police harass people of color on our campus so that policies might be enacted to change problematic policing tactics and promote justice in an on-campus law enforcement system intended to promote the safety of everyone on the UCLA campus.

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