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Collective Protesting as Existential Communication: A Phenomenology of Risk, Responsibility, and Ethical Attendance

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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF RISK, RESPONSIBILITY, AND ETHICAL ATTENDANCE

by

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A Dissertation
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TITLE: COLLECTIVE PROTESTING AS EXISTENTIAL COMMUNICATION:
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MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook

This dissertation explores the experience of participating in collective protest. I performed an existential-phenomenological analysis of five participants' in-depth accounts of their involvements participating in collective protest. I considered my interviewees' discourse to be reflective of their lived, embodied experiences of being in protest with others. Participants each described distinct protesting experiences. I explored their accounts in relation to six basic aspects of existence: self, other, embodiment, time, space, and choice/freedom. From within these existential realms, participants' accounts revealed five key existential themes of participating in collective protest: (1) Existential Crises and Activation; (2) Existential Magnification; (3) Existential Horizons; (4) Existential Stakes; and (5) Existential Time-Space. These themes emerged from the ways my participants discussed their experiences in contingent and concrete interrelationships with the six basic states of existence. I considered phenomenological similarities and departures across participants' descriptions and uncovered 30 distinct modes, or manners in which they experienced their participation in embodied collective protest.

My insights suggest that collective protests frequently emerge during periods of heightened cultural disorder. During such anxious times, many participants seek the company of others in collective protest to have their voices heard and to be with people who are similarly concerned. Participants discussed the importance of preserving and exercising their First

Amendment rights to publicly communicate dissent in this way. My interviewees also described understandings that protesting is a potentially dangerous activity, but that the risks are assumed collectively. While protesting can be unsafe, this collective action pertains to individuals banding together to make an ethical statement addressing the sense that something bad is on the horizon. While in protest together, people often meet like-minded others, and sometimes these connections bond members in enduring activist communities. At the heart of participating in collective protest are individuals who make a personal choice to adventure out in public to demonstrate in communicative interaction with fellow citizens.

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I am grateful to my participants for sharing their experiences of collective protest with me. My dissertation reflects these individuals' sustained dedication to activism and protesting and I could not have gained the important ethical and communicational insights I achieved without their willing participation. I thank my master's advisor, Dr. Kristin Langellier, Professor Emerita, for her warm enthusiasm and brilliant support. I cannot thank my parents, Bill and Sandy Rawlins, enough for their love, stimulating conversations, optimistic energies, and assistance with proofreading this work. I thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook, for his steadfast support and willingness to be flexible and facilitate my completion of this challenging study, even as it frequently changed as it evolved, while nonetheless coming together as a cohesive and revealing project. I am grateful for my committee members for their time, expertise, and encouragement. I also thank my brother, Brian, for attending the 2017 Women's March with me. His eagerness and support made this project possible by getting me excited about the ethical importance of collective protest. I thank my loving grandmother, Nancy Pollitt.

I could not have completed this work without the love and support of many amazing friends. I am thankful for my best friend, Dr. Sarah Hollingsworth's, care, consideration, and empathy throughout this journey. I only wish I could have been there for her during her dissertation in the same ways she was here for me during mine. Joe Hogan and his parents, Ray and Rose, have opened their supportive home and hearts to me during my time in Southern Illinois. Joe and I have had so much fun exploring Southern Illinois and kayaking together. I could not have completed this dissertation without his compassionate understanding and unconditional friendship. I am indebted to my friend, Beth Finta, for her good humor,

encouragement, energy, and especially for keeping those "*haterzz*!" at bay (haha). I also thank my colleagues Alex Lockwood, Tao Zhang, Antonio Spikes, Ally Brenneise, and Bolten Morales for their support, friendship, and enthusiasm.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my participants and all the other people who fight for justice, peace, and equality. I also wish to honor my dear grandmother, Nancy.

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CHAPTER 1

PROTEST AND THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

How lovely to think that no one need wait a single moment,
we can start now, start slowly changing the world!
How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make
their contribution toward introducing justice straightaway!

Just as with so many things, most people seek justice in quite another quarter,
they grumble because they receive so little of it themselves.
Open your eyes, first make sure that you are always fair yourself!
Give of yourself, give as much as you can!
And you can always, always give something.

–Anne Frank, "Give"[1]

Collective protesting animates cultural schisms. A growing faction assembles on streets as concerned individuals seek and find one another. Democracy promises its citizens the freedom to convene together in public demonstrations of apprehension, indignation, deliberation, and/or disapproval. Collective protest embodies existential tensions between subjects and the structural limitations of their own constitution. Such corporeal cooperation wields a powerfully conspicuous presence as an assembly meets to assume some semblance of control over the meanings of their tense, tenuous, transient, yet potentially boundless company. A protest's unfolding landscape of influence is shaped by its participants' sense of compulsory attendance; something feels *wrong* to participants, who want to do something about it *now*. Protest percolates the freedom of an open potential of citizenry that never expires. Collective protesters frequently address urgent pressures and complicate democratic assumptions about homogeneity, equality, and ethics. Could it be that citizens recognize themselves *qua* citizens on the streets?

In the United States, collective protest is an essential civil right guaranteed by the First

[1] Anne Frank composed this entry in her famous diary on March 26, 1944, while imprisoned at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp; she was executed one year later at age 15; see Frank 131.

Amendment to the Constitution. The First Amendment was ratified in 1791 along with the other protections contained in the Bill of Rights:

> AMENDMENT I
>
> *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*[2]

These freedoms secure the ability of United States citizens to let their government and representatives know when they are displeased, by making themselves seen and heard in public. Existentially, protesting is a choice people make as they pledge their bodies, voices, and time to be with others in civic demonstration. For many, protest events provide opportunities to connect with others and stimulate hope. This unique activity is a purposeful dance among strangers who seem to transcend much of their "everyday" unfamiliarity simply by sharing a presence. Being with others who choose to act in defiance against or in support of political activities and in/justice epitomize this phenomenon of intersubjective cooperation as an existential practice of freedom.

This dissertation examines protest from the protester's perspective. Across my initial research I noticed an absence of studies that draw on participants' discussions about their own protest experiences. As a result, the existential-phenomenological question guiding this work is: What is the lived experience of participating in collective protest with others? Protesting holds strong cultural relevance in the United States at this particular moment in time (2019-20). Ever since Donald Trump's unexpected presidential election victory over Hillary Clinton on

[2] This formatting is consistent with how it appears in the Constitution; see *The Constitute Project*.

November 8, 2016, U.S. Americans across the country have been protesting in record numbers. Since January 20, 2017, there have been 15,282 protests with over 11,423,694 participants demonstrating for equality, human rights, and to protect the environment.[3] My project considers how participating in protest with others also helps to ameliorate some of the more pervasive features of postmodern social malaise – including loneliness, isolation, depression, alienation, and the desire for a sense of belonging. I am interested in the existentially transcendent potential of collective protest and how these shared spaces foster unifying experiences with stranger-other-allies. Thus, this work employs existential phenomenology in considering the lived experience of collective protest.

I have been active in protest since the early 2000s. I pursued this dissertation topic after attending the 2017 Women's March on Washington, D.C., because that experience continues to have a profoundly optimistic resonance on my being-in-the-world. As I face life's daily challenges and conflicts, there are countless times when I reflect back on my participation in this inspiring event to draw from the courage and resilience it fuels deep within me. The protest experience is not limited to just "being there," because one does not merely "show up." Instead, the protest experience encompasses temporal, financial, and embodied labor related to making travel and lodging arrangements, physically getting to the event site, and joining a collective as it composes its own unique formation of inherent unpredictability and possibilities. I begin this chapter with my own narrative reflection about participating in the 2017 Women's March on Washington. Following this account, I present a literature review organized around the chronology of seven prevailing theories of collective action. In doing so, I note a conspicuous

[3] Count Love is a nonprofit organization that tracks all US protests relating to equality, human rights, and environmentalism since 20 Jan. 2017; this tally does not include alt-right or conservative political demonstrations, www.countlove.org, (accessed 28 Oct. 2019).

absence of protester self-descriptions, limiting the majority of these empirically-based theorizations. I close this chapter with a description of the chapters composing this dissertation.

Reflecting on The Women's March

On January 21, 2017, I took part in the largest single-day march in United States history.[4] I frame my story as unfolding sequentially as I revisit this experience "before," "during," and "after" the protest. Accordingly, this reflection progresses in five brief chronological snapshots: (1) This Can't Happen, (2) Making Plans, (3) Getting in Place, (4) The March, and (5) Afterglow.

1. This Can't Happen

On election night (Tuesday, November 8, 2016), I sit at my house with four close friends watching the TV coverage. Our spirits border on elation as we celebrate early state votes tallied and turning blue.[5] We are giddy in our excitement, fully anticipating that Hillary Clinton will sweep the election in a decisive defeat to become our first woman president. The convivial mood deteriorates as the unfathomable happens around 8:30 p.m. (CT). Suddenly, the election arrow predicting the winner at the bottom of the TV screen dramatically swings all the way across the half-circle from Clinton to Donald Trump. Our jaws drop from our faces in disbelief as we fall silent, save for a few fumbled sentences none of us can finish.

"She can still do it, right? She's . . ."

"There is *no way* that *he* . . ."

"I mean, they haven't counted California yet, so . . ."

[4] The first Women's March in 2017 is estimated to have included between 3,267,134 and 5,246,670 participants across the US, see Chenoweth and Pressman.

[5] The US bipartisan political sphere associates the color "blue" with the Democratic Party and "red" with the Republican Party.

"No! This can't be . . ."

My friend Greg and I jump into my car and speed to the liquor store for whiskey and vodka and anything else that might quell our growing sense of impending doom. It doesn't work.

When I awake the following morning with a hangover from hell, it takes me several minutes to gather up workable scraps of my muddled consciousness to comprehend why I feel so exceptionally dreadful. A glance at my phone unravels my numbed denial. I frantically call my mom as tears fill up my mouth.

"Mom! What are we going to do now?!" I gasp into the phone.

"I don't know, honey, I really just don't know . . . we are going to just have to . . ."

"We are so *fucked*! Sorry, Mom, I have to go. Love you." I hang up the phone and fall over backwards into bed.

A few hours later my best friend Sarah and I sit on my couch, puffy-eyed and surrounded by piles of crumpled tissues. We are determined to show our solidarity and watch Hillary's concession speech. As Hillary begins her speech, we both tense up, frozen in space – our tears well in place, as if suspended from gravity – until we both cry out at the same heart-rending moment. I can still remember Hillary's words: "I'm sorry we did not win this election for the values we share and the vision we hold for our country [. . .]. I know how disappointed you feel, because I feel it, too."[6] Her speech is short, and afterwards Sarah and I quietly ruminate about something, anything, we can *do* to help us cope with our overwhelming despondency. In sync, our phones start buzzing as friends begin texting us about the upcoming Women's March on Washington.[7] I know instantly that, no matter what it takes, I am going to this march. The first

[6] For the full transcription of Hillary Clinton's 2016 concession speech, see Golshan.

[7] See Davis for more on how Teresa Shook of Maui, HI started the Facebook page dedicated to the Women's March on Washington.

thing we check is the date of the march – it's straddling the weekend between the first and second weeks of school in the spring semester. Damn. Still going.

2. Making Plans

For many, the realization that Donald Trump will become our next president is world-shattering. Truly, a time-tested and well-established racist, misogynist, alleged rapist, xenophobe, and hopelessly unsuccessful "businessman" will now be running our democracy – most likely into the ground.[8] I am terrified. I *know* this Women's March is going to be bigger than anything I've ever seen before, and I want to lock down plans as quickly as possible. I call my older brother Brian in Raleigh, NC, and he promises he'll figure out a way to go with me. Unfortunately, my mom and dad and most of my friends don't commit to attending because of work, school, or other responsibilities. But, my friend Theo from graduate school in Maine, who now lives in Connecticut, is keen to go. Next, I call my mom's best friend Lainey, who lives near Philadelphia, to see if I can possibly fly into Philly and then somehow drive from her house to Washington D.C. She tells me it is a bit of a drive (about two hours), but I am always welcome. I book a flight from St. Louis to Philly for a couple days before the march.

I reach out to another friend from Maine, Matt, who runs a nonprofit in D.C., to see if he has any leads on somewhere to stay. He says he'll ask around and get back in touch. A week later Matt informs me that his friend Jenny is selling her house in D.C. and plans to close on the sale three days after the march. Jenny is willing to allow Brian, Theo, and me to crash at her empty house the night before and after the march. This thrills me because I have been noting that

[8] For information about Trump's history of racism, see Lopez; see Habib for more on his misogyny; see Hillin for Trump's many rape accusations; see Adler for his record of xenophobia; see Eichenwald for an account of Trump's many business failures; see Feffer for an analysis of Trump's "war on democracy"; see Tankersley for a discussion of the "risks of Trump's China trade war."

D.C. hotel rooms are going quickly and are also nowhere near my budget. Well, to be honest, I don't really have a budget, because I don't have any money – I just know I am going. With less than a month before the march, I edit the course syllabus of my women's studies class to notify my students of my planned absence. Then I wait as I set about trying to learn how to suffer the sound of hearing "President-elect Donald Trump" on NPR. I admit that during this time, any time I hear his name, I glare at the driver next to me or behind me, wondering if *they did this to me*. Something about hearing the words "President" and "Donald Trump" together during this time makes me shudder. It still does. Actually, just "Donald Trump" is enough to give me chills.

3. Getting in Place

Brian picks me up from Lainey's house in Philadelphia on Inauguration Day, the day before the march. Theo texts me to make sure my brother and I stop to get handkerchiefs, vinegar, and small sealable plastic bags. She explains that we'll each need one handkerchief soaked in vinegar in one baggie, and another clean one in a second baggie in case we encounter tear gas at the march. The possibility of being at risk or confronted with tear gas has not crossed either of our minds, but we stop at a discount dollar store just in case. Rain sprinkles on the windshield as we listen to music and drive the two hours and change to D.C. We meet up with Matt and get some dinner. Then we play pool and have a couple drinks until we can meet Jenny at her house after work.

Jenny texts me her "old" address, and Brian and I drive 15 minutes into the neighborhoods surrounding the many exquisite international embassies. We struggle to keep our eyes on the road as we pass mansion after opulent mansion. There is definitely unimaginable wealth in this area. We arrive at a beautiful two-story brick house with Jenny standing out front in a deep purple shawl. She greets us warmly and tells us how glad she is that we're here for the

march – she's going, too. Jenny apologizes for the absence of furniture since she's already moved out. We tell Jenny how grateful we are that she's opening her house to people she's never met.

"Oh, you're not strangers! You know Matt and I know Matt, haha. He's a trip, right? And now I know you guys, too!"

Jenny pats in her ballet flats softly across the wooden floors as she shows us around the large four-bedroom house, recommending that we sleep on the entryway carpet run because it has a little bit of padding underneath. She wishes us luck at the march tomorrow, gives parting hugs, and hands us keys. She asks us to please leave the keys in the mailbox when we depart on Sunday. Theo arrives later that night.

4. The March

On the morning of the march, Brian, Theo, and I awaken rather uncomfortably and much earlier than we had planned. We all have stiff backs from the floor, and as it turns out, the front door's lovely decorative glass both magnifies and bends the morning sun directly onto our faces, splashing across the faded entryway carpet like a spotlight. We don't care. We brush our teeth, bundle up, and walk a couple blocks to grab some breakfast at a spot right next to the metro entrance that we plan to take into downtown D.C. Apparently, we are not the only people with this plan, and the food line is quite long. Eventually we obtain coffee and tasty pastries before descending the steps to the metro to confront our third surprise of the day.

There is another very long line to purchase our metro tickets from the automated machine, but we get them. Then we quickly realize that the main problem is that the subway cars are already completely packed with people when they stop at our platform. No one is getting off and no one is getting on, either. We wait for about six trains in this condition before we decide

on a new strategy: we can either wait all day, or we can just force ourselves onto the next metro right before the doors close. In short, this works. We definitely do not make any friends on that brief ride, but we do get on (after we pull in Brian's arm, which gets stuck in the door of the train). As we arrive at the stop for the march, all we can see are hundreds and hundreds of people standing in an endless line as it snakes its way back and forth over a dozen times along the platform. Even before we can exit the train, we are greeted by the uplifting sounds of unified chanting:

"*Welcome to your first day, we will not go away*!"

"*I don't want your tiny hands anywhere near my underpants*!"

"*Show me what democracy looks like*! *This is what democracy looks like*!"

"*Pussies grab back*!"

We chant along, feeding off of the crowd's energy for the better part of the hour it takes just to get up the stairs and exit the metro.

My first view towards Capitol Hill is truly breathtaking; I have never seen so many people in one place in my entire life, and I can only see a couple hundred yards ahead of me to the point where the mass of people curves around an enormous decorative stone building and out of sight. I still remember being struck by the orderliness of *so many people*. The protesters appear to be polite and considerate to one another, forming columns and slowly filing along the sidewalks. The impatient kid in me identifies several potential short-cut opportunities among the ornate gardens and decorative turf lining the walkways – but *no one* tramples on these spaces, and neither do we. It takes us about another hour of slow walking to arrive at the march route – but we can definitely see and hear the passionate commotion long before we are able to weave our bodies into stride. It occurs to me that this experience is not about being in a hurry to get

anywhere, but instead about being here with these people, embodying our careful and committed humanity, and moving together as one.

Words fail to capture the awe-inspiring experience of being part of this enormous march. People everywhere are wearing pink "pussyhats,"[9] carrying thousands of colorful, clever, damning, and thoughtful signs. There is so much to see that it almost makes me dizzy to focus on anything but my feet at times. We move along, observing several impressive, larger, multi-person sign assemblages and side demonstrations. Unsurprisingly, the loudest and most belligerent part of the march is corralled around the freshly minted Trump Hotel. After unclogging ourselves from these dedicated protesters, we begin to realize that we are near the front of the march.

We ascend a substantial hill at the top of the main street we are marching on and look back on hundreds of thousands of people making their way as we are. We embrace for a moment before comprehending that we actually do have to keep marching because people keep coming behind us. Up ahead it seems that people are splitting into three directions. As we come closer, we realize that this is the "end" of the march. Well, the march ends at a street intersection, but the bodies keep flowing, spilling into unrestricted streets with cars driving on them. As we turn one corner – now looking for a place to eat – others follow as people fill the streets, forcing drivers to yield the way and park their cars on the side of the road. Granted, the marchers are not following "us" per se; there just is no discernable "end of march" plan, as far as we can tell. The three of us duck into an unassuming bar and grill and share dinner as we revel in the remarkable experiences of the day. We take a taxi back to Jenny's house and celebrate this cheerful feeling

[9] The Pussyhat Project™ (www.pussyhatproject.com) kick-started a protest trend of donning knitted winter sock hats that are made in multiple colors and feature cat "ears" to symbolize women's empowerment and resistance; Pussyhats are in direct response to Donald Trump's infamous 2016 audio leak in which he proudly objectifies women: "Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything"; see *The New York Times*.

until our exhausted bodies yield to the wooden discomfort awaiting us beneath the entryway rug.

In the morning we put the keys in the mailbox with a thank you note for Jenny. Brian heads home to Raleigh, and Theo gives me a ride to the Philadelphia airport on her way home to Connecticut. We all agree that the Women's March has been one of the most incredible experiences of our lives. As we part ways that day, I feel as if we each glow, radiating the hopeful energy now growing inside of us.

5. Afterglow

We marched with an exquisitely diverse group of people, unified by ethical imperatives of tolerance and decency. Every participant was from somewhere, but it was stunning to be *there*, together, in such consequential shared presence. I remember wondering how everybody got there. You certainly had to be determined to get on that metro. Did everybody have somewhere to stay? Perhaps there were other Jennys out there opening their spaces to new faces. After the Women's March on Washington, I am still anxious about Trump's propensity for destruction. But two big things have changed for me: I no longer feel alone, and I stop eyeing (most) people in my community with quizzical resentment and suspicion. I can now imagine nearly everyone I see as possibly having been at the march with me. Or even if they weren't "*there* there," there were hundreds of other marches with millions of protesters. Maybe they were at one of those. The spontaneity and dedication of this mass demonstration continues to reaffirm my faith in compassion, giving me the resolve and grace to transcend the powerlessness that still creeps up on me during these dark and twisted times.

***

Protesting is complicated and involves a variety of relationships and experiences. My story explores some of these aspects. This dissertation considers the experience of protest from a

protester's perspective. Collective protest is a dynamic experience that comes into being as numerous individuals decide to participate. This embodied phenomenon poses a challenge for researchers because it brings (largely) unacquainted contributors together, united by a common quest. It simultaneously emphasizes and binds individual, collective, cultural, social, and political facets, as these demonstrations unfold in and across their unique time-spaces. However, during my research on protest and collective action, I found a conspicuous absence of participant-centered accounts of this phenomenon. Across the past century of crowd/collective theorizing, many thinkers sum up protesting in various ways, and especially by jettisoning the individual experiences of the participants who each play a part in actualizing these demonstrations. Next, I survey seven prominent theories about collective public presence, which demonstrate this tendency.

A Chronological Literature Review of Seven Theories of Collective Behavior

This literature review provides a historical survey of foundational theories concerning collective action. I present my review chronologically because this layout captures what I perceive to be enduring and problematic tendencies in many social scientific approaches to studying protest. The majority of extant research on collective behavior, protest, and social movements comes from psychology, sociology, and social psychology. Crowds often form in times of social/cultural crisis, and theorists of collective participation inevitably face the dialectical conundrum of where to focus – on the individual or the collective. Theorists justifiably grapple with how to conceptualize this tension. Each of the following theories/theorists anchors their approach with a variety of presuppositions about the nature of protest. As theoretical lenses tend to function, these frames posit ontological parameters that subsequently delimit the horizon of potential insights.

The following seven theories of collective participation range in origin from 1896 to the 1990s. I consider the contributions of these prominent theories in correspondence with the critically important epistemological question: How does "this theorist" have access to the descriptions they provide as the basis for their theory? Or, how does "this theory" encompass the human experiences under scrutiny? I attend to these particular questions because I am interested in how these theories hold up to contemporary accounts of actual protest experiences (to be explored in Chapters 3 and 4). Accordingly, after I discuss each theoretical approach, for illustrative purposes, I briefly consider how each frame might analyze the Women's March I have just described.

The following theories are foundational conceptions, and many are dated in my judgment, although several are still in use today. I present these theories to trace the trajectory of how collectives have been classified across time, including early abuses of positivism, structural-functionalist reductions, and the often-neglected researcher standpoint that translates the cultural intelligibility or efficacy of symbolic interactionism. Despite my reservations, in characterizing these works I try to emphasize description over extensive critique. Meanwhile, in focusing on the communal embodied presence of public gatherings, I recognize that they occur in light of living identifiable persons assembling themselves together at specific moments in a particular culture. This is not an exhaustive review. Rather, I attempt to work efficiently in developing my chronology of these seven theories to set the stage for my own alternative approach to inquiry at this point in time. Following this literature review, I summarize the content by locating four significant methodological limitations I intend to address in this project and will discuss in greater length in the next chapter, about my methods. I begin with contagion or crowd theory.

1. Contagion or Crowd Theory (1896)

Gustave Le Bon's 1896 book *The Crowd* is considered by many to be a germinal work of crowd psychology. Le Bon designates crowds as always dangerous, "often criminal" operations that gain traction not through the sum of their parts, but rather from their own wayward psychological capacity – which he terms "racial unconscious"[10] (Le Bon 20; 15-16). Le Bon was a well-known political conservative of his time; some scholars believe he invented the idea of "mob mentality" to quash the potential of future uprisings in France (Reicher and Potter 170). Le Bon's worldview profoundly shifted during the Paris Commune of 1871, at which time he witnessed revolutionaries decimate and burn classical architecture, including museums, palaces, and other irreplaceable cultural treasures (Widener 25). Consequently, Le Bon refers to any public collective as being "a psychological crowd" in which the "sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed, doubtless transitory" (13). Many fascists, including Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, studied Le Bon's text for strategies to mischaracterize and eliminate collective demonstrations against them (Reicher and Potter 170).

Le Bon assigns "special characteristics to crowds," including "impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgement and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides – which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution – in women, savages, and children for instance" (20). Psychologists Stephen Reicher and Jonathan Potter refer to Le Bon's book as "a masterpiece of plagiarism and

[10] Le Bon does not deploy "racial" in this context as a specific ethnic identifier; rather, it reflects his belief that "the extreme mental inferiority of crowds" reflects "the individuals of a race [that] constitute the genius of that race [. . .], observation proves that, from the mere fact of their being assembled, there result certain new psychological characteristics, which are added to the racial characteristics"; one's "race" encompasses an intrinsically weakened state of marginal existence that predisposes a person to incorporate what Le Bon considers to be undesirable traits (4).

populism" because there are no citations documenting others' ideas that Le Bon lifts and modifies to fit his political agenda (170). According to Le Bon, a protest crowd's animalistic deficiencies are fully transmittable and easily spread. In fact, all one has to do is be present in a crowd to exhibit this infestation. Le Bon's contagion theory, crowd theory, or otherwise referred to as mob mentality, features few concrete examples and none from a participant's perspective within the experience. Rather, Le Bon exploits his scholarship to gain political traction by damning all manner of public demonstration or political dissention as mysteriously populated by "anonymous" people who are both "irrational" and "unconscious" (6). Who would dare to join a protest when this mob mentality is so curiously catching?

In applying contagion theory to the Women's March, Le Bon likely would conclude, without ever observing the march, that the entire demonstration's membership is irrational, and there is no viable political qualm since women are "inferior forms of evolution" (Le Bon 20). Further, if this event were the Men's March or even the We Love Le Bon March, Le Bon's theoretical myopia would likely still render his contagion theory impractical in its unilateral depiction of protesting and protesters as irrational beings. In Le Bon's estimation, state matters are too complicated for lay-persons to even begin to understand.

Next, I advance to Park and Burgess' theories of social unrest and circular reaction.

2. Social Unrest and Circular Reaction (1921)

Chicago School sociologists Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess were the first scholars to study crowd behavior empirically (Braude 1). Empirical approaches conduct research through observation. Park and Burgess argue that distinct persons come together and populate crowds. A "group character" emerges as members share the relational experience of being together as a collective (Park and Burgess 196). Park and Burgess critique Le Bon's contagion theory for its

equating all groups of people with crowds, and all crowd members as reckless, anonymous, and unconscious (Park and Burgess 200). Social unrest and circular reaction are two of Park and Burgess's conceptions that focus on the interrelationships among people in collectives. Their social unrest theory posits that instances of social change are always precipitated by periods of social instability (unrest) (Park and Burgess 55). From their perspective, "social control is the central fact and central problem of sociology" (Park and Burgess 55). In this sense, they examine how status quo hegemony manifests social control.

Park and Burgess conceive of circular reaction as a systematized approach to examine how institutional instruments of social control exert power over people who form collectives. They contend that group dynamics must include the "areas of (1) the cultural, (2) the political, (3) the economic processes and their relations to one another [which] may be represented by concentric circles" (Park and Burgess 55). The concentric circles represent the interrelational overlays of these three cultural entities, with commerce on the outside encircling the political, and the political encircling "culture." In other words, culture is shaped by politics, which answers to commerce. Crowd behavior is a thus a process irremovably imbedded within three universal hierarchical factors – culture, politics, and capitalism – and they identify the third, commerce, as being the most influential dynamic. Commerce has the "widest extension" due to its close institutional and regulatory ties with "custom and customary law" (Park and Burgess 55). Culture swirls beneath the tensions of politics and capitalism and this activity is the "circular reaction."

Park and Burgess entwine their concepts of social unrest and circular reaction, explaining, "The attempt to view them [aspects of social life] in their interrelations is at the same time an effort to distinguish and see them as parts of one whole" (55). They dispute Le Bon's

contagion theory for negatively essentializing crowds and make strides toward humanizing these collectives by focusing on their relationships with broader cultural "areas." Nonetheless, collectives are still treated as generalizable factions. Park and Burgess insist, "Social process is the name for all changes which can be regarded as changes in the life of the group. A group may be said to have a life when it has a history [. . .]. The individual living in society has to fit into a pre-existing social world" (52-53). They contribute to crowd theory the idea that a crowd's behavior unfolds as a process, and this event is never identically duplicated. However, the authors base their approach on vague objectifying suppositions about how a group's temperament is manifestly disclosed by "the individuals'" labor of assimilation. A "group character" emerges from the beings who matriculate together after traversing the universal and interconnected paths of cultural, political, and economic forces. In other words, Park and Burgess prescribe a homogenizing formula comprised of three forceful ingredients – culture, politics, money – that produce inequality leading to protest, or as they put it, a "group character." People do act together, but these socioeconomic factors affect individuals in distinct ways.

The Women's March movement did emerge from the "social unrest" of women's persistent exclusion from United States society and the centuries-old patriarchal installation of status quo hierarchies such as "culture," "politics," and "capitalism." Yet Park and Burgess's concentric mapping seems too generalized and abstract to consider intersectional identity variances. For example, where might a woman fit into this cultural mapping? Might a poor queer woman of color be more or less inclined to join "a collective"? Since Park and Burgess published their book in 1921, perhaps they noticed the 19th Amendment being ratified on August 18, 1920 (ourdocuments.gov). Perhaps not. It seems that the Women's Marches might have occurred ages ago if activism followed their exceptionally broad and therefore extensively limited schema of

social unrest and concentric circling. Nevertheless, Park and Burgess do consider power and its cultural omnipotence, but not individual agency and access (or gender, race, ability, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.).

Next follows a discussion of the emergence of group behavioral taxonomies.

3. Collective Behavior and Typology (1951)

Herbert Blumer, one of Park's students at The Chicago School of Psychology, extends much of his mentor's work. He is particularly influenced by Park's work on social unrest and circular reaction. Blumer, like Park, considers that "practically all group activity can be thought of as collective behavior" because "individuals are acting together in some fashion" (Blumer, *Symbolic* 137). Further, Blumer believes that "social problems are fundamentally products of *a process of collective definition* instead of existing independently as a set of objective social arrangements with an intrinsic makeup" (my emphasis, "Social Problems" 298). Blumer's commitment to symbolic interactionism influences his understandings of collectives, and he develops one of the first taxonomies of group behavior, identifying three overarching forms: the mass, the crowd, and the public (Blumer, "Collective Behavior" 168).

Blumer considers "the mass" disorganized and irrational; "the crowd" relates to emotionally-charged public demonstrations; and "the public" denotes the generalized political sphere – in a sense reminiscent of Jürgen Habermas' conceptions (Blumer, "Collective Behavior" 178). Habermas argues that the public sphere is always unstable because it indicates and performs the perpetuating political activity of (a) "society engaged in critical public debate" (52). Blumer differentiates the mass and the crowd from the public as each possessing distinct organizational patterns influenced by emergent and collectively-attuned emotionality. The public remains generally unpredictable and abstract, as with Habermas above. Blumer primarily focuses

on crowds, delineating four types: (1) the *casual crowd* – formed spontaneously by those whose attentions are drawn to a stimulus (e.g., a street performance); (2) *the conventional crowd* – the participants of which recurrently gather together for planned events (e.g., sport matches); (3) *the expressive crowd* – where members join based on communal sentiments (e.g., religious occasions); and (4) *the acting crowd* – in which members gather based on shared ethical impulses, common objectives, and a willingness to potentially surrender their personal standards of conduct for the common interest of working towards a greater good or righting a wrong (Blumer, "Collective Behavior" 178). Acting crowds form as "the interaction between people continues" and they realize that their shared struggles generate a "collective behavior" that "secures form and organization" (Blumer, "Collective Behavior" 221). For example, if working wages are insufficient for employees to support themselves and their families, workers may organize their ranks, becoming an acting crowd, as they embark on a labor strike.

Blumer is particularly inspired by Park's theories of social unrest and circular reaction. From these concepts, Blumer specifies the important distinction between Le Bon's contagion theory of irrational mobs and the shared ethical imperative at the heart of his conception of collective action: "Collective enterprises seek to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest and derive their motive power on the one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new system of living" (Blumer, *Symbolic* 99). Thus, Blumer simultaneously retains a distanced empirically-objective view of crowds while advancing the idea that crowds are *peopled* groups drawn together by a process of collectivized emotional imperatives, seeking a common goal.

I wonder which "type/s" of collective/s Blumer might consider the Women's March participants to inhabit. From my experience, at turns the demonstration fluctuated in

temperament, depending on the parade milieu. With millions of participants on the scene, spaces were sometimes "casual" as curious onlookers joined, while in/at other time-spaces, participants appeared more "conventional" (experienced; routine), "expressive" (emotionally-charged), or "acting" (driven by ethical imperatives). It truly depends on *who* is observing the action and, consequently, how this same being determines a collective's unifying intentionality or purpose. While none of these crowd types is particularly pejorative, this theory maintains distance from the collective experience of being part of a collective – as well as the possibility of merging or crossing these "barriers" that distinguish one collective crowd type from the others.

Next, I consider value-added theory.

4. Value-Added Theory (1962)

Neil J. Smelser's value-added theory posits that collective movements materialize around a common drive to challenge oppressive norms and "reconstitute" new ones (9, 71). Drawing from economic models and seeking to locate causal (determinant) relations among interdependent variables within collectivities, Smelser extends an earlier behavioral taxonomy developed in 1951 by Talcott Parsons. Parsons considered four universally hierarchized components of collective social behavior: (1) situational facilities (access to resources), (2) roles (expected behaviors in social contexts), (3) norms (governing rules perhaps obstructing collective goals), and (4) values (goals of social action as well as the basis for institutionalization) (Parsons 11). Parsons deems the fourth, "values," strongest, and the others descend in importance, or ascend in progressive importance, depending on how one wants to think about it.

Smelser builds on Parson's schema, offering six components, or determinants, that "add-value" or efficacy to a social movement. "The scheme used to organize these determinants is that

of the 'value-added' process, as found in economics. Determinants, it is argued, must combine according to a certain pattern. Each factor is a necessary condition for the occurrence of collective behavior" (Knottnerus 390). Smelser's functionalist framework is predicated on the idea that a strain in the social system (social unrest) is required for social movements to occur – reminiscent of Blumer and Park. The six determinants of Smelser's value-added theory are:

> (1) structural conduciveness, a social situation that permits or encourages some type of collective behavior; (2) structural strain, a situation in which some type of deprivation exists; (3) growth and spread of a generalized belief, a belief that makes the situation meaningful to actors [. . .]; (4) precipitating factors, an act or event that confirms a generalized belief [. . .]; (5) mobilization of participants for action, bringing the affected groups into action, especially through efforts of the leaders; and (6) operation of social control, the counter-determinants that prevent, interrupt, deflect, or inhibit the accumulation of the previous determinants. (Knottnerus 390-91)

The ambition of Smelser's added-value theory is frequently critiqued for being abstract, deterministic, and excessively prescriptive in its comprehension of collective behavior (Marx xii). Gary T. Marx, Smelser's pupil, points out that, in added-value theory, "collective behavior" "is only found in readily observable behavior [. . .] when it is accompanied by generalized belief. This not only puts the cart before the horse; it assumes that the horse is the best pulling device and that what needs pulling is the cart. An alternative path begins with questions, not with a theory or method" (Marx xii). Beginning such inquiries with questions about active participation within a group dynamic seems apropos. Perhaps researchers should consider the relational contexts of embodied participation before squarely delimiting possible findings with externally imposed hypotheses.

Smelser uses economic models that configure causal determinants and patterns of relations in order to explain why people protest. For Smelser, protests are collectives, and collectives illustrate the catch-all objective causality of economic models. Smelser assumes that members of a collective have shared goals and that determining this harmony is readily observed by identifying the *cause*. If Smelser were to view the Women's March and visually scrutinize the gathering to identify an underlying "cause," he might face some difficulty in this effort because the participants are quite diverse and their embodied involvement spans several different "causes," many of which would be challenging if not impossible to discern through visuality alone. The Women's Marches attracted the largest protest participation across the nation in United States history (Broomfield). I am confident this occurred because the marches embrace a variety of interrelated social causes, welcoming all oppressed peoples as well as supportive allies under the umbrella of collective ethical action. This umbrella safeguards all who wish to stand together under its shield, redirecting trickles of cold rain away from this humanist haven. Thus, this "inside" has space for infinity[11] and is highly attuned to invitational, intersectional, and inclusive feminist praxis.

Next, I discuss resource mobilization theory. It is considered by many, including Smelser himself, to be fashioned after the value-added model (Smelser 8). Recall that Smelser already extended Parsons' original conceptualization in proposing his own theory.

5. Resource Mobilization Theory (late 1960s-1970s)

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) emerged amidst the vigor and turbulence of 1960s social movements. Abruptly, social movement theorists abandoned their inquiries of participants' perceived (ir)rationality and instead began examining the structural relationships between a

[11] See Emmanuel Levinas, especially *Totality and Infinity* pp. 48-52, for his contrasting discussion of infinity, desire, and goodness; goodness is infinite, while desire sustains its own sense of dissatisfaction (52).

movement's organizational configuration and its strategies, as well as its access to resources. This resource mobilization posits the ability to determine how "successful" a social movement is in sustaining itself or achieving its goals. J. Craig Jenkins describes RMT:

> Mobilization is the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action. The major issues, therefore, are the resources controlled by the group prior to mobilization efforts, the processes by which the group pools resources and directs these towards social change, and the extent to which outsiders increase the pool of resources. (532-33)

In RMT, resources are broadly construed, obviously quite subjective, and difficult to quantify. Two different RMT approaches splintered in dispute over whether collective action is (always) political or not (at all) in its collective activity of pooling resources. Charles Tilly considers the resource mobilization of social movements as a political process, objecting to "sociological interpretations of protest, conflict, and violence that treat them as occurring outside of normal politics, or even *against* normal politics" (Rule 170-71). Tilly's political orientation to RMT is referred to as RMI (the "I" stands for the roman numeral one) (McCarthy and Zald 534). John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald favor an apolitical "entrepreneurial/organizational approach" called RMII (resource mobilization theory II, respectively) (McCarthy and Zald 534).

Tilly's RMI theorizing concerns empowering underrepresented people. He studied interrelationships between urban violence and cultural marginalization in the 1960s, considering "the nature of the organizational base (communal or associational) and its relation to the structure of power (acquiring, maintaining, or losing position) to trace the historical development of 'primitive' to 'reactionary' to 'modern' forms of collective violence" (Marx and Wood 370). In other words, Tilly's RMI examines connections between people participating in collective

action who lack resources and how this structural vulnerability unfolds in relation to status quo and/or institutional power. Tilly uses RMI to elucidate how poverty entraps people in a marginalizing cycle that exacerbates community violence. Apparently unaware of the persistence of social inequality over time, McCarthy and Zald base their RMII in "an affluent American society," in which it might make sense for them to pose the (potentially) heuristic question: "Earlier theories focused on the role of grievances and deprivation in triggering social movements. But should not the level of grievances and deprivation and consequently the number of social movements be going down as society becomes more affluent?" (533). This question continues to pulse in their minds because they ask it with renewed vigor in a 2002 piece, written "over three decades since the initiation" of their original RMII theorizing.

McCarthy and Zald (RMII) "argue that the increased funding available for social movements from foundations, churches, and the government has facilitated the emergence of a professional class whose careers involve social movement leadership" (Marx and Wood 369). RMII's trickle-down logic insinuates that when these cited institutions thrive, they inject substantial monies and resources into social movements. McCarthy and Zald appear to believe that "resources" are everywhere, and it is merely a matter of mobilizing them. Perhaps poverty is a symptom of its own wasted resources. RMII features unrealistic characterizations of economic distribution and income disparity. Thus, resource mobilization theory has two strands concerning collective action – one political, and the other, somehow not. Or, at least RMII imagines that organizational and institutional structures relate to power but not to politics. In this regard, we must remember the injunctions of feminist theory, cultural studies, or critical theory to see the inseparability of politics, power, and wealth.

I do not think that either strand of RM theorizing has the capacity to "case study" the

Women's March. RM focuses either on the long-game resource allocation of successful movements, or the end-game of movements that fail and how they must have misappropriated or failed to access resources from the start. The Women's March was so spontaneous, massive, and liminal that it is difficult to assess the "resources" it required. In fact, the resources at play are the most valuable resources in existence – *people*, millions of people gathering together in solidarity. I believe considering how and by whom resources come to be "mobilized" in society is a very worthwhile project. However, I also believe RM has some overly rigid limitations in understanding protest or social movements. For one, it awaits the "finality" of a movement before backtracking to trace how identifiable resources facilitated or hindered the determination of a movement's ostensible "success" or "failure." How can "resources" or their "mobilization" possibly determine a movement's success or failure? I consider the resource-poor Civil Rights Movement. I also wonder how RM might theorize the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. Ironically, Tilly and his RMI deployment may have even anticipated the necessity of OWS. Conversely, McCarthy and Zald's RMII approach likely would render OWS a failure because the movement lacked resources aside from participants' embodied resilience, community support, and ethical dedication to the importance of their cooperative message. I consider the Occupy movement in greater depth in Chapter 4.

In my judgment, there are two more noteworthy theories of collective action to consider – emergent norm theory and new social movement theory.

6. Emergent Norm Theory (1972)

Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian proposed emergent norm theory (ENT) in 1972 as a lens to consider how collectives form during times of cultural crisis, and the ability within these gatherings to establish new social norms to cope with or address heightened sociocultural

stresses. Emergent norm theory speaks to instances "in which usual conventions cease to guide social action and people transcend, bypass, or subvert established institutional patterns and structures" (Turner and Killian 3). In other words, rule-bound behavioral norms are collectively challenged or undermined in the interest of opening up new avenues of agency. There are three essential suppositions informing ENT: (1) participation is rational; (2) an extreme event precipitates the assembly of an activated collective; and (3) "new norms of behavior appropriate to the collective action situation emerge through group processes without prior coordination and planning" (Arthur 1).

ENT proposes that distressed collectives embody a mode of symbolic interactionism during unforeseen disasters, collaborating on the construction of new norms due to a shared sense of urgency, duty, or necessity (Aguirre et al. 302). In its accounting, ENT also follows the now-familiar objective-outsider perspectival pattern of viewing collectives as primarily monolithic gestalt formations. Additionally, ENT is timely in its sunny rendering of social movements as successful in their aims, especially when they draw their maximum strength from within their ranks. The Civil Rights Movement and Women's Liberation revolutions had each recently upended the marginalizing power of the status quo. It is important to note that both of these human rights struggles have been fighting for equal recognition for centuries. Sadly, people of color, women, and immigrants still face ignorance and misguided backlash from people who embody callousness and historical amnesia. Or perhaps, such simmering resentments only fester when unequal education practices fail to equitably distribute and mobilize these precious resources across all United States citizens.

ENT might see great potential in the Women's March I attended. I *felt* as if new norms – new *positive* norms – were sprouting up all around me. But then I returned home, and

unfortunately, these "new norms" did not come with me. Well, the #MeToo movement[12] did gain traction following the marches. It seems ENT considers emergent "norms" to be positive interventions. However, it is unclear if, how, and when these "new norms" transfer to cultural spaces outside of a movement. Or perhaps, they eventually become norms, as norms do, when they are no longer "new." I also wonder if ENT is equipped to address negative norms. If ENT can invert its approach, there are other pressing concerns it might address, such as the alt-right's neo-normalization of white supremacy, racism, and its glorification of violence.[13]

Next, I discuss the final conception of this survey, new social movement theory.

7. New Social Movement Theory (1990s)

New social movement thinkers intermingle theoretical aspects of Marxism with postmodernist augmentations. New social movement theory (NSMT) incorporates Marxist critiques of capitalism's post-WWII rise and its insidious effects on social relations (Epstein 233) – especially as democracy was exported as the language of capitalism. NSMT also includes postmodernist considerations that reappraise Marxism as being conceptually idealistic with too much attention paid to the abstract means of material production (as in value-added and resource mobilization theories) (Epstein 253). Essentially, NSMT lacks theoretical consensus, as do many postmodernist theories, which is not necessarily a bad thing. Even so, theorist Steven M. Buechler identifies five thematic tenets of NSMT.

Buechler's five themes of new social movement theory include: (1) the affirmative understanding that collective action works; (2) a focus on promoting strategies for developing

[12] This social media movement encourages survivors of sexual assault, and especially survivors of color, to speak openly about past abuses to raise awareness, healing, and empowerment; name their attackers; and establish a network of solidarity and support among survivors, www.metoomvmt.org/about/, (accessed 1 Nov. 2019).

[13] "The Alternative Right, commonly known as the 'alt-right,' is a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals whose core belief is that 'white identity' is under attack by multicultural forces using 'political correctness' and 'social justice' to undermine white people and 'their' civilization" (*Southern Poverty Law Center*).

participants' self-empowerment, autonomy, and agency in relation to hegemony; (3) some theorists prioritizing postmodernist values in collective action over debates about access to resources (e.g., Marxism, RM); (4) an effort to problematize essentializing collective identities with the understanding that no central or stable organizing principle can determine or manifest collective homogeny; and (5) an appreciation that there are all kinds of networks and resources that may not be apparent to an outsider (e.g., the "objective" observer) (442). Buechler also postulates four questions that point to "the major debates" regarding NSMT.

Buechler raises four useful cross-cutting concerns about new social movement theory, posing them as questions: (1) What does it mean to designate a social movement as "new" as opposed to "old"? (2) Are social movements defensive and reactive, or proactive and progressive? (3) Are social movements primarily political or cultural in nature? (4) Can a social movement's base be defined in terms of social class? (447). With the exception of the third, I believe these are important questions to raise, although I will not address them at this point. In many ways NSMT serves usefully as a "check" on social-science theorists who may wish to travel back in time, in my estimation, and psychologically or sociologically systematize crowds and/or impose totalizing typologies.

The Women's March embodies many of NSMT's theoretical tenets. For instance, the movement seeks to be inclusive, empowering, connective, supportive, and sustainable. It is almost as if "women" are a universal cause and call upon us to rally for and with them. NSMT is not really a "theory" in the traditional sense but instead more of a critical guide for researchers who study protest and social movements. Consequently, NSMT lacks theoretical consensus – in the style of postmodern strategies that disrupt positivist research approaches. Further, NSMT does not recommend or point to preferable methodological or theoretical procedures. Rather, it

supplies such protocols with important considerations that combat many of the shortcomings exhibited by earlier theories of collective action.

This literature review surveyed seven prominent theories of collective action spanning more than a century. Undoubtedly, this theoretical evolution highlights some key advances that these theorists contribute to the ongoing canon of collective action research. But in particular, and especially in consideration of the aims of the present work which seeks to explore the *experience of participating* in collective protest, several of these theories impose reductive theoretical tendencies that potentially obscure their subject/s under scrutiny from the start. With the exceptions of the emergent norm theory and new social movement theory, the other five models investigate collective protest *empirically* – from a researcher's externalized and presumably "objective" vantage point. Joseph J. Kockelmans observes that empirical approaches to human study exemplify four reductive propensities termed the theoretical, the formal, the functional, and the quantitative (243). Empirical analyses produce knowledge that is *theoretical* (objective/observable), *formal* (abstracts elements from the whole), *functional* (logical/causal relationships are drawn from the formal elements), and *quantitative* (categories capture the meaning of a phenomenon of study and findings are expressed numerically) (Kockelmans 243; Polkinghorne 202).

Contagion theory exhibits the "theoretical" empirical exploit of morphing individuals into a homogenous collective before imposing the totalizing group emotional temperament of a frenzied, irrational, and destructive "mob mentality." Social unrest and circular reaction theory, as well as related collective behavior typological approaches, perform "formal" extrications of an entity's elements as these components are isolated from their former holistic unity, somehow stabilized in this decontextualized state, and subsequently categorized in accordance with preset

research parameters (hypotheses or agendas). Value-added and resource mobilization theories demonstrate the "functional" operations of designating elemental relationships between causal determinants. In both of these conceptual cases, successful social movements maximize the benefits of having "access to resources." Curiously, while "access" and "resources" anchor these approaches, neither "factor" is rigorously defined. Nonetheless, value-added and RMT retroactively designate "why" a social movement "succeeded" or "failed" by examining the data identified for computation.

Many empirical approaches to studying human existence finalize their insights quantitatively, that is, through statistical and numerical means. The contingencies of personal and relational life elude many of these calculating efforts to digitize lived experience. Meaningful idiosyncrasies that make up a person are hopelessly lost in such limiting descriptions and translations. Emergent norm and new social movement theories both depart from this traditional empirical protocol. Instead, these postmodern conceptions challenge many of the assumptions that routinely represent the rational grounds for empirical studies. Emergent epistemologies informed by postmodernism and the critical turn reject collective homogenization, the presumed validity of a researcher's objective standpoint, and the use of "rationality" or similarly decontextualized and/or simplified criteria to populate typologies and categorizing efforts by identifying "types" of people. It is my argument that empirical methods following overdetermined theorems and unrelated mathematical protocols fail in their efforts to grasp and communicate the intersubjective personal meanings of human existence. There are no short-cuts to the unfolding mysteries of life; we are always already underway living active lives through our embodied and relationally-attuned being.

Further, empiricism lacks the theoretical complexity and reflexive protocols to

simultaneously consider an individual person's experience of their collective involvement. This is due to the fact that empirical approaches start and end with objective observations. By way of a tired analogy, empiricists focus on the ways "a tree" is essentially the same thing as its surrounding forest – they are all trees, nothing more nothing less. Perhaps some trees, a Maple for instance, may turn a different color than others at particular times, but this variance does not change the fact that the tree is still just a tree among trees. Unique personal attributes are usually circumnavigated by those who utilize empirical analyses. People are singular and extraordinarily diverse. Any typifying schema attempting to strip anybody of their individuality only serves to estrange beings from their existential home – their exquisite, exclusive, elusive, and concretely-situated existence.

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this dissertation I introduced the focus of this work, which is the experience of participating in collective protest. I shared a story about my participation in the 2017 Women's March on Washington in an effort to acknowledge my active involvement in protest, as well as to feature an introductory example of some of the complexities and material commitments some protests necessitate. Next, I performed a chronological literature review and surveyed seven influential theories of collective action. Beginning with Le Bon's contagion theory that characterizes protesters as being driven by an irrational "mob mentality," I considered each conception and identified their epistemological claims concerning "what" protests are and "how" they occur. I also discussed other theories that begin at the end of protest by questioning "if" and "why" the movement was successful in achieving its aims through examining how members mobilized available resources.

In an effort to demonstrate the limitations of each of these conceptions, I imagined how

each ontological frame might consider the Women's March I attended. The majority of these empirical theories modify the protest experience by fusing individual participants into "a collective," or further, in designating "a collective's purpose" or the motivating or emotionally-construed "types of collectives." The authority to make these reductive decisions is granted visually, by the distanced and disengaged observations of a presumably objective researcher. These theories exhibit the double-bind intrinsic to conceptualizing collectives; they are social groupings populated by distinct individuals. Establishing or imposing a monolithic character from or onto a collective empties the activity of its constitutive foundations. Resulting findings are distorted and disconnected from the distinctively embodied relational experiences that bond such groups together.

Collective protests create and occupy unique worlds. Encompassing explanatory models and their subsequent claims tend to either overgeneralize or oversimplify this active participation. Consequently, this dissertation explores the concretely embodied experiences of being part of a protest collective through participants' self-descriptions. I performed in-depth interpersonal interviews with five diversely experienced protesters. Each person told me stories, employed figurative language, and used analogies to express how it feels to protest with others and why this involvement is meaningful to them.

Chapter 2 details the existential-phenomenological method I employ in this work. It is my contention that understanding the imbricate interplay of participant-collective protest experiences is best served and advanced through participants' own words about their lifeworlds. Chapter 2 describes the methodological procedures I follow. I address the ontological presuppositions informing my approach, identify the unit and level of analysis, and explain this study's methodological protocol. I also discuss the recruitment of my participants, the structure of the

interviews, and explain the existential phenomenology format in which I present and then engage with these interviewees' descriptions. I consider the qualitative steps I have taken to ensure the rigor of my findings, as well as note the ways my dissertation avoids many of the theoretical limitations that inform most empirical systems of inquiry, such as the majority of those presented in this chapter.

Chapters 3 and 4 feature participants' descriptions in five existentially-informed thematic groupings that include these individuals' distinctly embodied modes that shape their experiences of collective protest. Chapter 3 explores three existential themes: crisis and activation, intersubjective magnification, and contingencies of freedom. Chapter 3 follows the descriptive accounts and stories from three participants that detail some of the facets that compel people to go out and protest, what it feels like to be in these spaces with other co-protesters, and the central importance of considering inter/cultural and personal contingencies and affordances associated with having the freedom to protest.

Chapter 4 features two participants and their accounts of the latent risks of protesting, as well as the benefits of being a part of these emergent protest communities. These descriptions inform two existential protest themes: risk and responsibility, and emergent community time-spaces. Labor, time, latent danger, and the difficulty of sustaining a protest movement are also topics that emerge. Chapter 5 concludes this dissertation with a summary of the findings and insights I achieved in pursuing my research questions. I consider the limitations of my study, how my work on this topic contributes to ongoing protest research, as well as to the field of communication studies. Finally, I reflect on some important future directions my research could take for further exploration. Now, on to Chapter 2 to discuss the existential-phenomenological method guiding this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AND PROCEDURES OF INQUIRY

Collective protesting spans personal, relational, and social realms. Protesting is usually a freely-chosen mode of immersive participation that involves adventure, principles, and a commitment of one's time, energy, and resources – without any assurances of success or safety. Collective protests create distinctive embodied formations as largely anonymous individuals fill public spaces to display spectacles of togetherness and shared presence. In many ways, participating in collective protest can be a transformative experience. Protests inspire collaboration across personal, political, and public dimensions and are open to anyone who wants and is able to attend; meanwhile, each event is also uniquely situated in concrete time-space. These distinctive experiential dynamics make studying the lived experience of participating in collective protest methodologically challenging. That is, collective protesting unfolds across the existential terrains and commingled contexts of self, other, body, time, and space, aligning in the spatiotemporal solidarity of *this* demonstration *here* and *right now*. Existential phenomenology's unique personal-relational-lifeworld orientation is useful for studying ostensibly abstract experiences within diverse collectives, such as the experience of participating in collective protest. I contend that existential phenomenology offers a qualitative framework that emphasizes lived participant-centered accounts of what it means to be with others and breathe life into protest experiences.

In Chapter 1 I introduced the topic of this dissertation as the experience of participating in collective protest. I shared my story of attending the 2017 Women's March on Washington and detailed seven theories of collective action. In doing so, I considered how each of those theoretical lenses might conceptualize my experiences at the Women's March. Across these

seven theories, I noted four principal conceptual shortcomings that serve to distort or oversimplify their collective participatory phenomena of study. These four limitations – termed the theoretical, formal, functional, and quantitative frames – reflect ontological operations that impose visual, "cultural," or economically-derived quantitative evaluations of collective experience. These efforts to reduce complex human phenomena into instrumental accounts derive from the subjective vantage point of a "presumably" objective and non-participating researcher's scrutiny. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, these objectifying epistemological efforts fail to capture the protest lifeworld and the living exigencies of experiencing protest with others. Each protest unfolds anew, and previous experiences may not be replicated or even approximated in later ones.

This methods chapter aims to highlight the important role that qualitative phenomenological communication studies research plays in understanding the ways our relational existence creates and discloses tangible cultural experiences as we live, voice, perform them, and make them meaningful alongside others. Thus, I begin by presenting this dissertation's study context and research questions. Second, I address how qualitative research protocols address some of the quantitative pitfalls identified in the previous chapter. Next, I provide a brief overview of existential phenomenology. Then, I identify the ontological presuppositions grounding this dissertation. Following this, I detail my participant recruitment and interview protocols. Finally, I describe the existential-phenomenological method guiding my analysis of participants' responses about their experiences of collective protesting.

Study Context, Research Questions, and Qualitative Research

This dissertation seeks to better understand the experiential and relational nuances of what it means to "do protest" with others at this particular moment in the United States

democracy. In recent years, collective protest in the United States has arisen with renewed vigor and in record numbers, including both the number of protests and the number of protesters.[14] Frequently, protest is characterized by its observable features or retrospectively scrutinized by studying available "data" concerning quantifiable diagnostics believed to have influenced a movement's presumed success or failure. These externalized approaches usually generate computational findings about "protest" without ever speaking with the living bodies on the ground *accomplishing it together*. Consequently, contemporary United States protest participation has not previously been described in the words of those who concretely participate in this existential phenomenon as it collectively embodies and performs democracy. Approaching protest involvement from a communication and phenomenological perspective is unique because scholars have repeatedly assumed, overlooked, and overwritten the lived participation of this experience. Protest, wherever it occurs, always involves mobilized and changing human persons – actual bodies and beings putting themselves together to their own potential peril or benefit.

Research Questions

Three overarching research questions guide this project:

RQ 1: What is the lived experience of embodied participation with others in protest?

RQ 2: What do participants' descriptions illustrate about how collective protest involvement unfolds across time?

RQ 3: What do individuals' accounts of their subjective experiences reveal about the communicative accomplishment of engaging in collective action?

These research questions attend to the three general quantitative research deficiencies identified

[14] Count Love, a nonprofit organization, tabulates 15,282 protests with over 11,423,694 attendees since they began tracking these events on 20 Jan. 2017, www.countlove.org/statistics.html, (accessed 28 Oct. 2019).

at the close of the last chapter. We can better understand the distinction between quantitative research agendas and qualitative approaches through a brief discussion of *data* and *capta*.

Quantitative (Data) and Qualitative (Capta) Research

A central consideration in any research design involves determining the type of evidence that one "collects" in order to affirm, challenge, explain, or extend findings or representations of a phenomenon of study. In social science inquiry, a chosen methodology must align with both the research questions and the researcher's theoretical assumptions about humans, the world, and communication. Quantitative research strategies seek to compile *data* – or as Richard Lanigan describes it – "that which is *given* as evidence" (112). On the other hand, qualitative researchers conduct their inquiries in order to uncover *capta* – or, "that which is *taken* as evidence; it is the methodology of *discovery*" (Lanigan 111). Quantitative data is collected within a bounded framework in pre-established terms (given as supporting evidence). In contrast, qualitative capta pertains to participants' disclosures about the lived experience of a phenomenon (taken from experience; discovery). As Lanigan points out, "The research advantage with discovery is that a *qualitative judgment* allows for accuracy and abstraction in description (depiction)" (111). I further discuss accuracy and abstraction later in this chapter. Phenomenological approaches facilitate a reflexive qualitative examination of a person's unique experience of a particular phenomenon that is richly described, considered for instances of experiential agreement and departure, explicated, and then, *taken* as evidence (capta). Conversely, quantitative methods often design studies with hypothesized findings in mind, and subsequently gather participant responses *given* as evidence (data) in accordance with supporting or rejecting the predetermined hypotheses through this "verification" that ultimately allows for generalization.

Next, I present a brief overview of phenomenology and existential phenomenology

before identifying the ontological groundings informing this approach. Then I describe the qualitative existential phenomenology method employed in this dissertation to analyze participants' descriptions of their experiences protesting with others.

Phenomenology and Existential Phenomenology

In this section I consider Edmund Husserl's foundational understandings of what phenomenology is and does, as well as some conceptual contributions made by his existential successors, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. Phenomenology spans multiple interdisciplinary realms, each with distinct methodological protocols and assumptions. In a general sense, phenomenology is a philosophy and method that focuses on consciousness, perception, and lived experience (Husserl 24-25). By creating or eliciting vivid yet deliberately unbiased descriptions, a researcher seeks to uncover the structural essence(s) constituting an "an object of perception," or the experience of perceiving the meaning of said object-thing (Sartre, *Being* 14; 106). Existentialism is a dynamic philosophy concerning the general yet concrete business of existence and existing. This dissertation advances my own adapted methodological protocol for performing qualitative existential phenomenology – that is, for providing, eliciting, and interpreting my own and my co-researchers' vivid accounts of experiencing collective protest.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology has a rich history as both a philosophy and method that addresses people's subjective experience of their situated existence, or lifeworld. This philosophical orientation believes one's consciousness of lived experience reveals underlying structures of meaning that give shape and intelligibility to any experience-as-such. Innovator Edmund Husserl's foundational phenomenological structure of experience is *intentionality* – or, "the

property of being a 'consciousness of something'" (120). In *Ideas*, Husserl criticizes prevailing positivist empirical practices for frequently dictating rather than investigating social phenomena. Husserl focuses his phenomenology approach around countering positivist assumptions about human universality by scrutinizing the very grounds of such objectively-derived determinations – how do objects become known and thus familiar to a person? Husserl reasons, "*An experience has no perspectives*," and thus, meaning arises through human consciousness *of* and intentional encounters with other(s)-world-things (135). In other words, meaning arises relationally, through our interactions and contact with the other people and things in our lifeworld. Husserl states that his mission is to return the focus of research agendas "To the things themselves!" (135). Husserl seeks to transcend and challenge some of the recurring limitations of objective certainty by encouraging researchers to investigate lived experience and (re)consider the source of meaning-making as well as how individuals perceive the same things in different ways.

Husserl describes phenomenology as "a science covering a new field of experience, exclusively its own, that of 'Transcendental Subjectivity'" (11). He understands transcendental phenomenology as a tandem, corollary project of looking into the ontic "essential nature of certain particularly construed *types of experiences*" along with a consideration of the "*fundamental difference in the* [*phenomenal*] *mode of being given*" as an experience (134). In distinguishing *ontic* meanings, or factual data, from *phenomenal* meanings, or knowledge gleaned from personal experience, Husserl seeks to account for the manifold ways that lived experience shapes a distinctive perception of the world (135). Accounting for our active participation-in-the-world renders Husserl's approach unique.

Husserl re-terms ontic meanings as "noetic content," or the "data of the real" (258). Likewise, he refers to the related phenomenal experience as "noematic content," or those

particular meanings in one's unique consciousness that are "perceived," "remembered," and "judged as such" from past experience (258). Husserl considers an example of witnessing an apple tree in bloom (258-60). *This tree* as the *object of consciousness* is at once both intelligible as "a tree in bloom" (noesis), while it simultaneously evokes a pleasurable reception (noema) in one's perception (in this example the blooming tree is pleasant for Husserl). Accordingly, he demonstrates how these correlated noetic and noematic meanings address the "real" and the "perceived" from a new perspective about lived experience called phenomenology. Methodologically, phenomenology cycles through three interconnected steps: description, reduction, and interpretation.

Husserl's phenomenological method begins with the selection of a phenomenon or object for analysis. Following this selection, one then induces *epoché* – considered to be the first "reduction" – as preconceived impressions of the world-thing are transcended, opening up the possibility of examining the structures of one's own consciousness of the phenomenon/object. These eidetic (vividly detailed) descriptions of a phenomenon of study – without any "rationalized" associations – form the first step of Husserl's three-step method (description, reduction, interpretation). Following the description, is a *reflection* on *how* an object is meant or intended – or, the experience of the meaning or content (also referred to as the reduction). During the description and reduction stages, researcher beliefs remain suspended, as all potential interpretations are *horizontalized* – or, taken as equivalent prospective meanings with no preordering hierarchy (Husserl 210; Ihde 21). This substitutional exercise is informed by the practice of *free imaginative variation*, which posits possible variations in constitution and meaning to establish which structures are essential to an entity's foundation, and which are not (Husserl 57; Ihde 23). Donald Polkinghorne describes Husserl's procedure of free imaginative

variation:

> With each addition or deletion, the researcher questions whether the amended description still describes an example of the same kind of object or phenomenon as that which the original example was said to exemplify [. . .]. Through this process of mental experimentation, the necessary and invariant features, the identical core of meaning or essence of the original phenomenon, become apparent and can be distinguished from features that are accidental and hence irrelevant to the eidetic description. (44)

After the codification of necessary and invariant "ingredients" of a particular phenomenon, "the realm of transcendental consciousness" is revealed as the realm of "absolute Being" (Husserl 210). From here, a researcher engages the third step of interpretation in which they explore and compare the variant meanings constituting the lived experience of the phenomena under examination. By recursively cycling back through the detailed descriptions and core characteristics identified during the reduction, Husserl insists that researchers take care to ensure their interpretations of phenomena remain true to the lived experience of the phenomenon. Husserl's phenomenological method became known as descriptivist, eidetic, or transcendental phenomenology because the most important and foundational step is a bracketed and richly detailed description, which he believes provides access to the intentionality of the structural logic making "this experience" none other than *this experience*. Husserl encourages us to resist taking the appearance of things by their face value and to, instead, scrutinize the variant appearances of things in order to thematize how a thing displays (its) face value/s. The correspondence between the experience of an appearance and the experience of being experienced as an appearance has not yet acknowledged its affective presence. Next, Husserl's pupil, Martin Heidegger, considers some corporeal implications arising from a being's relational lifeworld, as he ponders

phenomenological heuristics concerning how things show themselves to us. Following this discussion, I engage Jean-Paul Sartre's contributions to existential phenomenology.

Existential Phenomenology

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology contends that consciousness and lived experience precondition one's comprehension of the world of meanings. As such, Husserl fashions his phenomenological project around a correspondence between appearance and perception. In an explicit retort to Husserl ("To the things themselves!"), Heidegger pronounces: "To letting the things show themselves!" By this statement, Heidegger asserts that all of our activities are always already "in the world" and thus the entirety of our existence revolves around our "being-in-the-world," *and* our "being-with-others" (33). In other words, here consciousness is not the foundational universalizing structure of being. Rather, Heidegger turns Husserl's phenomenological method on its heels and uses it to examine ontology itself. Whereas Husserl focuses on how meanings emerge in consciousness and perception to an engaged researcher, Heidegger projects his phenomenological inquiry towards the inescapable existential project of existence itself (*Dasein*) – including that of the researcher (Heidegger 26). This inward turn leads to a second phenomenological arena – that of interpretivist, hermeneutic, or existential phenomenology.

Heidegger refutes several of Husserl's ontological stances, especially the idea that we can identify and/or bracket and subsequently "transcend" personal biases in order to access our subjectivity in isolation. Heidegger takes to task ontology itself – what is being? – in his hermeneutic or existential phenomenology. He points out that Husserl's prospect of identifying pure essences through phenomenological reductions is unachievable since descriptions and free imaginative variation are always already part of an interpretive process subjectively situated in

social, cultural, and historical contexts; he terms this understanding, "historiological" (62). Heidegger refers to the process that informs and directs one's interpretative scheme as hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is "the methodology of those humane sciences which are historiological in character" (Heidegger 62). As such, Being-in-the-world is the fundamental structure of *Dasein* (*this* existence, *here*) (65), and any "structures" arising outside from *Dasein* are "hazy [and] indefinite," or else catch-all "pregnant structures that may be structurally indistinguishable from certain ontological characteristics of an *authentic* Being of Dasein" (Heidegger 70). Consequently, general "structures" of being are always already irreducibly together in consciousness, just as we are caught up in the world. Therefore, there is no transcendence.

While Heidegger never finalizes a specific "method" for doing existential phenomenology, he claims "phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities – ontology" (61). This domain of inquiry about existence is called existentialism. Ontologically, Heidegger splits existence into two realms of awareness – being (*sein*) and Being (*Dasein*) (26). In Heidegger's view, all previous ontological investigations concerning existence, or Being (*Dasein*), have paradoxically ignored, centralized, and taken for granted the generalized entity, or being (*sein*) (60-61). Departing from Husserl's definition of *Dasein* as "the apprehension of concrete existence" (58), Heidegger interrogates the very notion of Being as an active doing and questioning of and about existence (61). Accordingly, "Being" with a capital "B" signals the self-aware project of existence in which the toils of daily life take on more concretely thematic existential meanings concerning disclosing "who," "what," and "how," "one" is consciously "doing" *this existence* "here" – *Dasein* (Heidegger 61). On the other hand, Heidegger deploys "being" in lowercase letters to refer to a person who is, as of yet, unreflective with regard to the

intersubjective grounds and related tangible complexities accompanying every person's existence:

> Because phenomena, as understood phenomenologically, are never anything but what goes in to make up Being, while Being is in every case the Being of some entity, we must first bring forward the entities themselves if it is our aim that Being should be laid bare; and we must do this in the right way. These entities must likewise show themselves with the kind of access which genuinely belongs to them. (Heidegger 61)

In other words, the phenomenological "structure" *of* Being doubles as its own question *about* existence and possibility; what possibilizes a being's Being? A Being questions the terms of their very existence while a being is perhaps unaware that their outward gaze originates from a distinctly unique "inner" Being. This conundrum posits that Being's "categorical structure" eludes even itself (Heidegger 37). Because we cannot ontologically "know" any transcendental structures from outside of our existence within them (we cannot bracket away things we "know"), Heidegger focuses his phenomenological approach on the essential relations that characterize an entity (being) and its mode/s of Being (how it exists and what possibilizes or actualizes this existence) (37).

Heidegger's existentialism redirects the focus of transcendental phenomenology from eidetic descriptions considered to capture intentional structures of consciousness experience (perception), towards an emphasis on the importance of our situated existence *in* and *across* existential *time-space/s* that shape and enact our becoming. Heidegger focuses on "the Being of the 'there'" in two parts: (1) the existential constitution of the "there" (existential modes – "the Being-possible"), and (2) the everyday Being of the "there" (phenomenal modes – "basic state of Being-in-the-world") (171; 184). Thus, Heidegger channels Husserl's universal-transcendent

conception of phenomenology as intentional consciousness to a more personalized and concretely lived experience of one's Being in relation to burgeoning possibilities. Being is also grounded by basic states of existence (e.g., in universal existential themes, such as time) (Heidegger 68). Time gives a place for one's bodily comportment to unfold in, through, and across (Heidegger 68). Meanwhile, each of us develops an inescapably presupposed yet distinctive and unfolding perception of our Being-in-the-world.

Existence is the ontology we experience in our concrete lifeworlds as we are flung into the confluence of Being-in-the-world-with-others (Heidegger 60). Ontic aspects of our existence are closest and well known, while ontological features are the farthest away and constantly overlooked (Heidegger 69). Locating qualities and characteristics – or modes of understanding emergent meanings in relational life – is the messy reflexive lifeworld project at hand; it is always underway, profoundly partial, and infinitely incomplete. Heidegger says: "the Being of Dasein can be indicated provisionally. Its existential meaning is *care*" (65). Heidegger's phenomenological exploration tends toward existential questions about a Being's fleeting temporality, because time rushes through whatever this existence may be. Life is unsteady, unlike structurally stabilized appearances, and Heidegger contends there is no phenomenological transcendence or possibility of escaping or fully knowing what one is. Instead, there are only "possibilities" of Dasein's protracting "explication of time as the transcendental horizon for the question of Being" (Heidegger 63). Existence is not an ontological fact; it is constantly up for debate even as it evades its own examination. The mystery of existence is never solved, although it is lived. Next, I integrate some of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential understandings and conclude this survey.

French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre considers relational ethics in his existential

phenomenology concerning intersubjectivity, freedom, and choice. Sartre incorporates aspects from Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophizing in his own contributions to existential phenomenology. Sartre characterizes human existence, or being, as a consciousness lacking fulfillment that materializes across its own unfolding engagement with the world, as subjects endure the interminable task of constantly making choices in order to live (*Being* 23-26). Sartre agrees with Husserl that all consciousness is a consciousness *of* something, similarly noting that "consciousness has no content" of its own (*Being* 11). Therefore, "all consciousness is a positional consciousness *of* the world" as consciousness "transcends itself in order to reach an object, and it exhausts itself in this same positing" (*Being* 11). Sartre admires Heidegger's work *Being and Time* but takes issue with the idea that *Dasein* is a being whose Being is in question, for there is no "mode of being which manifests being and veils it at the same time" (Sartre, *Being* 25). For Sartre, Heidegger all but forgets the importance of consciousness in existential thought. Sartre famously states that "existence precedes essence," reflecting the idea "that man[15] first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself" (*Existentialism* 21). When a person discovers pathways to personal freedom, Sartre insists it then becomes their ethical obligation to guide others in their own liberating pursuits of better life possibilities. For Sartre, existentialism "is a doctrine that makes human life possible and also affirms that every truth and every action imply an environment and a human subjectivity" (*Existentialism* 18). No one lives this life entirely alone.

Sartre's ontology posits two types of being: *for-itself* and *in-itself*. Sartre's dual formula designates being for-itself

[15] Sartre's androcentric style of writing that was common during his time is preserved for readability. (Personhood and humanity are universalized as "man" or "men".) While I maintain this strategy throughout the present work, it is important always to use inclusive and gender-neutral language.

> as being what it is not and not being what it is. The question here then is of a regional principle and is as such synthetical. Furthermore, it is necessary to oppose this formula – being in-itself *is* what it is – that which designates the being of consciousness. The latter in fact, as we shall see, *has to be* what it is. (*Being* 28)

These two realities manifest consciousness in tandem. Existence in-itself represents the being of an object of consciousness, which is non-conscious Being that infinitely overflows the knowledge we can have of it (*Being* 800). Conversely, being for-itself – or, consciousness itself – is a consciousness defined by a lack of Being that seeks the nihilation of being in-itself because it desires Being and to cultivate a relation to Being (*Being* 800). Being for-itself stands out by defining itself through negation – in knowing what it is not and seeking to be/come what it is (*Being* 800). For example, if I desire to become a famous magician (for-itself), I must first become aware that magicians exist as a consciousness-of (in-itself) – which, by the way, *I lack* – before I can even begin to explore this becoming-possibility (for-itself). For Sartre, existentialism is both inescapably and inexhaustibly relational.

Sartre explicates his ontology of people's inherent and inseparable (self-other) relationality in a brilliant distinction among three ontological modes of embodied being:

> I exist in my body: this is the first dimension of being. My body is utilized and known by the Other: this is its second dimension. But in so far as *I am for others*, the Other is revealed to me as the subject for whom I am an object. Even there the question, as we have seen, is of my fundamental relation with the Other. I exist therefore for myself as known by the Other – in particular in my very facticity. I exist for myself as a body known by the Other. This is the third ontological dimension of my body [. . .].
>
> Thus, my body is not given merely as that which is purely and simply lived; rather

> this "lived experience" becomes – in and through the contingent, absolute fact of the Other's existence – extended outside in a dimension of flight which escapes me. My body's depth of being is for me this perpetual "outside" of my most intimate "inside." (*Being* 460-61)

Here, Sartre explains that we do not exist through "our" intentional consciousness of reality that populates the outside from within *our* interiority (as Husserl believes). Rather, Sartre considers the realization that when "we" (or the embodied "I") face another person, we are transcended as a mere object-for-the-other because the two-way reversibility of this epiphany reflects our very existence back to us. Sartre says, "I exist in my contingency [. . .]. My body is there not only as the point of view which I am but again as a point of view on which are actually brought to bear points of view which I could never take; my body escapes me on all sides" (*Being* 461).

Sartre's intersubjectivity posits that our futile efforts to flee our own body to be with the Other (in-itself) affirm our existence as a being for-itself. But the Other is a similarly mimetic being (for-itself), mirroring the interrelational and existentially reversible nature of corporeal forms (we are similarly perceived as an Other in-itself). For Sartre, people experience a weighty *choice* of how we shall exist with Others:

> The one who realizes in anguish his condition as *being* thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation. But as we pointed out at the beginning of this work, most of the time we flee in bad faith. (Sartre, *Being* 711)

Anguish symbolizes the irreducible interrelationship of a dependent existence, one that often obscures one's constituting partner from the event because we cannot see ourselves; we only see

the Other. But we share a co-presence as the Other seems to be returning *my* gaze, which in turn, bears my being as a concretely relational embodied Being. I exist. Concern for the Other concerns me.

In this section I have described Husserl's innovation of phenomenology and some of Heidegger's and Sartre's existential additions. This dissertation draws methodological influences from all three thinkers. Husserl's phenomenological focus on evoking detailed, unbiased descriptions about lived experience helps guide my investigative approach. Heidegger's existential orientations imbue phenomenology with the important understanding that persons manifestly and concretely exist in unique time-spaces alongside others. Sartre's existential approach revolves around the unavoidable "thrownness" and inherent contingency of existence. This condition of subjectivity encounters itself while balancing the impending responsibilities of constantly making choices to exert one's personal freedom alongside a dedication to helping Others cultivate their own facilities of agency.

Next, I discuss ontology and related suppositions informing this work. Then I describe recruitment efforts as well as the qualitative existential phenomenology method employed in this dissertation to analyze participants' descriptions of their experiences protesting with others.

Ontology

Ontology is the philosophical realm pertaining to what exists, is deemed to be "real," or is granted presuppositional status, thus grounding the terms of research exploration. In communication studies ontology concerns human being as it is meaningfully lived, shared, and communicated with others (Rawlins 54). Existential phenomenology understands human being as embodied, relational, and concretely-situated; subjects are always already in contact with others and grasping at the world of meanings. Existentialism engages ongoing life and general

existence, and phenomenology contributes descriptive rigor and practices that facilitate a cycling between the universal and particular, as voiced by experiencers – in this case, protesters.

> Existential philosophy focuses on basic or universal themes of human existence, including, among others, the need to find purpose or meaning in our lives, the finiteness of existence, our freedom and responsibility in making choices, and our commitment to isolation or relationship with others. (Hein and Austin 4)

Expressed together, existential phenomenology calls for a hermeneutic approach, one which describes and accounts for its interpretive steps that seek to uncover the "modalities of self-world relationship" – our experiences of our experiences (von Eckartsberg, *Life-World* 8).

Existential or hermeneutic phenomenology (existential phenomenology hereafter) ontologically grounds itself in the context of lifeworld existence. A being-in-the-world, which is the subject at the heart of existential phenomenology, lives and acts within the circumstances and contingencies of their concrete lifeworld. Hermeneutics, from the Greek word "to interpret," is the study of interpretation (Polkinghorne 218). In existential phenomenology, hermeneutics centralizes the importance of identifying the ontological (grounding suppositions, e.g., a human being, or subject, makes choices and acts in the world) and epistemological (evidence, e.g., concrete descriptions about lived experience) functions of a researcher's principles that guide the research process, interpretive efforts, and subsequent findings. In existential phenomenology the lifeworld itself is the focus of analytic attention. Accordingly, this dissertation attends to the lifeworlds of collective protesters. Methodologist Donald Polkinghorne notes an important hermeneutical shift that Heidegger performs on Wilhelm Dilthey's earlier work:

> Whereas Dilthey had seen hermeneutics as a method for providing an objective understanding of the expressions of life, Heidegger proposed that understanding was the

> basic form of human existence. It is not a way we know the world, he said; it is the way we are [. . .]. Being human is a laying-open of what is hidden: we are beings who approach ourselves with the hermeneutic question "What does it mean to be?" [. . .].
>
> He [Heidegger] condemned as "abstraction" any attempt to distance oneself from an object of inquiry in order to know it better. We *know* through interaction and engagement he said. Our existence, in its nature, has been "tuned" to become a specific existence – this existence here, "thrown into" the world. (Polkinghorne 224-25)

Thus, existential phenomenology follows a hermeneutic interpretive cycling that dialectically ripples between conceptualizing existence as the "lone" self-project of distinct individuals, and existence as an interactive, collective, historical, social, and cultural continuity, anchored by and within exclusively embodied time-spaces. One's lifeworld expands and contracts across seemingly endless streams of choices and consequences, as existence recurrently encounters its ultimate obstacle: the fluctuating transience and dependence of becoming and being-in-the-world-with-others. Hermeneutic systems of inquiry are "especially sensitive to the circular nature of understanding the human realm, which is studied from within itself because hermeneutics maintains that there is no way for the knower to stand outside the lifeworld to observe it" (Polkinghorne 240). As such, there is no independent, objective, or universal reality shared by humans. Rather, we come to know our distinct lifeworlds through our engagement with them.

Ontologically speaking, existential phenomenology grants that self-descriptions of one's lifeworld experiences of a phenomenon of study, or "life-texts," are revelatory of personal insights informing such articulations of living meanings (von Eckartsberg, *Life-World* 23). Therefore, in this work, interviewees' discourse concerning their protest experiences is understood as reflecting the cognitive, affective, and corporeal dimensions that give light to their

experiences as they are lived. Existential phenomenology ontologically presupposes that there are basic or universal states of existence that ground human life (Heidegger 68). Heidegger first considers the existential realms of "being" and "time" in his exploration of existence. Donald Moss and Ernest Keen synthesize various existential phenomenologists' foundational themes into six existential universals of consciousness. These fundamental aspects of being (in)form the human condition as an existence characterized by: (1) an openness to the world from/in which one emerges and becomes; (2) the fact that life unfolds within the geographical spatial confines of our concrete-situatedness in the human world; (3) an understanding that embodied being creates tactile possibilities and limitations herein; (4) the temporality of life as it comes to be revealed to us through our ongoing experiences in and across distinctive cultural time-space/s; (5) the ability to communicate with other people through language and shared sociocultural symbols; and finally, (6) our irreducibly intersubjective existence that creates shared meanings across numerous others with whom we socialize and age with (Moss and Keen 109-16). These grounding existential states of existence – *self, other* (intersubjectivity), *embodiment*, *space* (cultural historicity), *time*, (possibilities and unfolding futures), and the Sartrean addition of *choice and freedom* (agency) – disclose concretely lived meanings and contingent modalities of the lived experience of participating in collective protest with others. I restate these basic, universal, or general states of existence for clarity: self, other, embodiment, space, time, and choice/freedom.

In this dissertation, interviewees' self-descriptions of their distinctive modes, or manners of experiencing protest with others, serve as the unit of analysis. That is, my participants' discourses constitute the capta, or qualitative discovery of insights. The level of analysis reflects my experiences with participants during the loosely structured, dialogic, in-depth interviews we

shared as they voiced their experiences of collective protesting. From my engagements with their discourse, or (their) ordinary talk and storytelling, meanings emerge through systems and creative strategies of descriptive language, as well as from embodiment. The research domains of inclusion and exclusion revolve around participants' discourse. Included are respondent statements about their experiences protesting that I perceive to richly capture the significance this embodied activity holds for them. Excluded from this study are irrelevant statements or stories that I did not deem pertinent to this inquiry. For example, because the existential topic of protesting is so abstract, broadly construed, indefinite, and oftentimes deeply personal, some participants offer lengthy discussions concerning their political views, opinions about presidents, and various other cultural happenings that fall outside of the focus of this dissertation.

Next, I detail the specifics of this study with regard to participant recruitment and interview protocols.

Study Design and Participant Recruitment

This dissertation draws its capta (qualitative evidence) from digitally recorded interviews with five participants. I interviewed in depth two women and three men, ranging in age from 29 to 67 years-old (three of these interactions occurred in-person and two were over the phone). These interviews averaged around 65 minutes each. The conversations were loosely structured and featured questions relating to what the protest experience is, how it feels to be at one, and what it means for the respondents to "do protest" with others. I encouraged participants to describe specific and concrete instances in which their lived experiences of protesting felt heightened, if they ever felt at risk or in danger, as well as how it felt for them to be around present co-protesting others in and across differing time-spaces (See IRB Approval in Appendix A; Participant Questions in Appendix D).

The focus of this project is to better understand people's experience of collective protest; for this reason, qualification for participation was broad. The primary criterion for participation in this dissertation was for interviewees to have engaged in collective protest in the United States within the previous two years (2016-2018). I recruited participants through various snowballing efforts. First, I created a flyer advertising my study and posted it on Facebook to be openly shared and distributed as widely as possible (See Appendix B for the Invitation to Participate/Recruitment Flyer; Appendix C for the Participant Informed Consent Form). Additionally, I mailed stacks of 25 paper flyers to friends and family living in Raleigh, NC; Philadelphia, PA; Denver, CO; and Seattle, WA; to be posted around these areas. From these efforts, I interviewed 17 persons about their protest experiences. However, as I began my initial analysis, I soon refocused my attention to five participants who have been involved in protesting over longer periods of time, have engaged in collective protest in different ways, and were better able to provide diverse in depth descriptions about their involvement (See Appendix E for Participant Interview Dates and Ages).

At the start of this dissertation, I intended to perform a semiotic phenomenology analysis of a larger number of participants' descriptions about their lived experience of collective protesting. I was fortunate to interview 17 willing contributors either over the phone or in person. I initially focused on these participants' verbalized accounts about their protest experiences and sought to identify patterns of meaningful similarities and differences across their statements. During this effort, something unexpected emerged: I realized that nuanced contingencies of protesting experience were not apparent in the "less" experienced participants' accounts. Much of my interviewees' talk voiced nearly identical phrases about the experience. Common referential phrasings emerged about protesting, such as "having one's voice heard," "being with

like-minded people," and "being a part of something bigger." And while these discussions were instructive and helped to provide a broad interpretive frame for the discourses I was examining, they also were rather superficial. That is, most of these common turns of phrase lacked diverse, descriptively rendered phenomenological variations, which are important for achieving qualitative rigor and meaningful abstraction in interpretation. For example, nearly every participant told me that they protest because they "want their voice heard." But when I requested deeper clarification about what this meant, most of the less-experienced protesters could not articulate further. Consequently, I realized that this activity is an existential and embodied undertaking that is more readily expressed in detail by people with extensive and sustained protesting experiences. Meanwhile, many of the common semiotic phrasings shared across my participants were an informing presence in this work as they were explored in existential detail.

Thus, five seasoned protest participants surfaced through their abilities to "story" and tell me about their diverse experiences. Their anecdotal accounts perform descriptive and dialectical hermeneutic rigor by pulsing back and forth from their particular situated experiences of protest in relation to their more universal conceptions or expectations of this activity (van Manen 120). Consequently, this work revolves around five protesters who express this experience as more of a lifestyle and unfolding communal engagement, rather than a rare, isolated, or spur of the moment occurrence. As such, this existential phenomenology inquiry considers these five participants' in-depth accounts of their personal activism, as well as the energy it takes to sustain such dedicated participation. I shifted my phenomenological approach from tabulating linguistic correspondence and departures within semiotic discourses to probing protesters' existential lifeworlds. Collective protesting emerges in their narratives as a dynamically embodied and versatile activity – a doing that is personal and collective; verbal and embodied; *a shared*

presence with primarily, strangers.

Next, I describe an empirical model of existential phenomenology that I have adapted for qualitative inquiry in this dissertation.

Von Eckartsberg's Empirical Existential Phenomenology in Psychology

In attending to the collective and abstract yet personal nature of this contingently pursued protest phenomenon, I adapt Rolf von Eckartsberg's four-step approach for doing existential phenomenology in psychology. Von Eckartsberg concentrates on the importance of following interviewees' deep descriptions of their experiences in order to uncover deeper understandings of how (certain) psychological disorders manifest themselves and affect people's lives. This focus is in the interest of developing better treatment methods and options. For my purposes, I follow the framework of von Eckartsberg's four steps, but I alter the research terms to incorporate Heidegger and Sartre's existential phenomenology approaches to relational and responsible ongoing human being, as discussed earlier.

Von Eckartsberg conceives empirical "existential-phenomenology" as a method that reveals "the essential general meaning structure of a given phenomenon in answer to the implicit research-guiding question: What is it, essentially?" ("Existential-Phenomenological" 21). From this Husserlian vein, von Eckartsberg seeks to provide a "clear-cut general progression that pinpoints and guides their ['research subjects'] recall and reflection" (21). The primary methodological adjustment I make to von Eckartsberg's approach is my own dedication, as a qualitative communication studies researcher, to resist the impulse to "guide" participants "toward" a "particular" insight. Because I do not seek to gather an affective consensus from my participants, I remain as faithful as possible to their own words with no originating hypothesis or agenda. I summarize von Eckartsberg's four-step approach before providing my revised steps.

The following four steps retain von Eckartsberg's given names for each stage, but with my synopsis.

Step 1: Problem and Question Formulation: The Phenomenon

In the first step the researcher sets the terms of the investigation in the form of a "hypothesis." Von Eckartsberg advises that researchers avoid phenomena that are known to them but as of yet, lack "consensual meaning" from fellow experts ("Existential-Phenomenological" 21). From this perspective, he would likely deter researchers from studying participation in collective protest because there is no "consensual meaning," and such participatory realms often defy externalized expertise.

Step 2: Data-Generating Situation: Protocol Life-Text

Step 2 focuses on collecting "data" from "co-researchers." While von Eckartsberg considers writing to be a better method for gleaning participants' reflective insights, he says we can explore such intuitions through dialogic interviewing – primarily, if a researcher directs the spoken query to the topical focus ("Existential-Phenomenological" 22).

Step 3: Data Analysis: Explication and Interpretation

Data analysis detaches the descriptive experiences from participants as a researcher digs within themselves to find the "psychologic," or structural meaning behind these life-texts ("Existential-Phenomenological" 23). Here the goal is to find the link between the particular and the universal. This is a worthy aim in social-psychological work that seeks to identify and address relevant features informing social and cultural human disorders. Von Eckartsberg hopes to reveal the constituting components of a psychological phenomenon and to consider which facets are unique to an individual and which are shared.

Step 4: Presentation of Results: Formulation

Step 4 regards the manner in which we express findings. Von Eckartsberg says this involves a two-pronged communication effort: one lay-person "debriefing" for the "subjects," and one in more specialized disciplinary jargon for "fellow experts" ("Existential-Phenomenological" 22-23).

In the final section of this chapter, I present my revised approach for performing existential phenomenology in communication studies, and as I employ it in this dissertation.

Method: Qualitative Existential Phenomenology

The existential phenomenology method guiding the analytic work in this dissertation involves the following four steps adapted from von Eckartsberg's approach and infused with some of Heidegger's and Sartre's existential understandings.

Step 1: Identify a Relational Phenomenon for Inquiry and Design an Exploratory Study

The first step is to locate the topic of study, which is the experience of participating in collective protest. Next, one *formulates experiential research questions* accompanied by *evocative participant questions* designed to induce interviewees to provide rich descriptions. Relatedly, one considers "*who and how many*" *participants* to interview and "*how*" one intends *to recruit potential co-researchers*. I described this first step in detail earlier (See Appendix A for IRB Approval; Appendix B for Participant Invitation and Recruitment Flyer; Appendix D for Interviewee Questions; Appendix E for Participant Interview Dates and Ages).

Step 2: Engage in Dialogic Interviews and Co-Create Capta

The second step concerns the experience of accomplishing interpersonal interviews with participants. This step includes briefing participants on the purpose and scope of the study and providing an informed consent form, and recording their verbal consent. In this study,

interviewees then devised their own identifying pseudonyms to protect their identities (See Appendix C for the Participant Informed Consent Form). Whether these exchanges occur on the phone or in person, it is important for researchers to *engage participants' specific lifeworlds* with open ears, considerate enthusiasm, and curiosity, *posing follow-up questions* to glean greater clarity and detail as needed. This is important because often when people discuss their "basic life experiences" in relation to a phenomenon, the researcher can miss key informative details in passing if not listening carefully. These existential particulars often provide key descriptive insights as interviewees reflect on the situated and contingent meanings of their experiences.

After participating in an interview, I listen and relisten, as I craft a flow-chart that maps and outlines the discussion while noting relevant time-stamps. Time-stamps appear in a specific form registering discursive events, that is (minutes: seconds). For example, (58:17), reflects a participant's speech beginning 58-minutes-and-17-seconds into an interview. In these flow-charts I begin to note particular communicative and embodied modes of the experience and reflect on what protesting is and means for each participant. Next, I transcribe the entire interview and continue to attend to emergent modes, unique characteristics, and similar and/or diverging qualities that make the collective protest experience intelligible and meaningful to the interviewees. Some transcriptions feature italics, capitalization, or bolded type to textually reflect some of the more performative aspects of participants' discourse – for example, in cases of heightened spoken emphasis (See Appendix F for the Performance/Transcription Key). Across this consideration, I explore the ways my participants discuss the impact the existential themes have on or play within the experience. For example, "time" and "space" make a Saturday morning protest a completely different experience than many Occupy efforts. In fact, time and space make everything unique but may also tend to lull us into "ignoring" these somewhat

mundane or unnoticed constituting elements of life. Considering the interrelationships across such existential thematic entities and embodied phenomenological tendencies reveals insights about how particular expectations concerning aspects of lived experience come to be taken for granted. The next step delves into these complexities.

Step 3: Explication and Interpretation: Themes and Modes

Step 3 draws from the existential phenomenologies of Heidegger and Sartre in grounding lived orientations to a topic of inquiry by attending to the situated contingencies as they are lived and experienced in one's concrete lifeworld. "Structures," or stable referential meanings, such as those found in Husserl's phenomenology, hold no rationalized consensus or even the possibility of uncovering "one" that is universally shared in existential phenomenology. Instead, the basic states of existence, identified earlier, consider participants' descriptions *in relation* to these inescapable concrete lifeworld *contingencies*. This dissertation on the experience of participating in collective protest grounds and works-out-from the following six universal or basic states of existence as they are relationally lived, experienced, and described by participants: self, other, embodiment, time, space, and choice/freedom. These realms of existence are not unique as we all experience them as human beings who continuously become-in-the-world-with-others. During my interpretive process, I listened and relistened, read and reread, and tracked participants' narratives to consider the prominent experiential modes that are largely shared across the interview discourses, as well as those that uniquely inform and characterize each individual's protest participation.

I came to understand the six general existential states through participants' stories and accounts that disclose various themes and modes of experiencing collective protesting. A "mode" is a way or manner in which something is done. For example, my brother and I traveled

long-distance separately to the Women's March; Brian drove and I arrived on a commercial flight. Then we traveled together from Philadelphia. Other persons caravanned together in personal vehicles, rented buses, and took trains. This dissertation primarily uses "modes" to refer to the specific phenomenological aspects and features of participants' descriptions about their thematically related protest experiences.

Further, these modes represent the ways in which an interviewee orients to protesting with others and are examined in relation to the overarching existential protest themes. Thematic modes, as embodied and identified by participants, emerge, overlap, and reveal both distinctive and shared understandings and expectations of this participation. Through juxtaposing the particular (participant's mode) and the universal (existential theme) and working back and forth between the particular and the universal, the hermeneutic circle keeps cycling. In this way, patterns emerge of how collective protest involves multifaceted phenomenal meanings across this dedicated, relational, existential experience. Thus, Step 3 seeks to identify common and distinct (inter)relationships as they reveal themselves in these patterns and partings.

Step 4: Presentation, Formatting, and Communicating Findings

Existential phenomenology attends to situated contingencies as they are lived out in one's lifeworld. There is no endgame goal of delimiting or even conclusively answering a question. The purpose is to attain rich descriptions and identify key experiential modes in relation to the existential protest themes grounding the lived experience. This dissertation emphasizes five existential thematic groupings collective protest, as they have been embodied, voiced, and lived by participants. Many participants focused their descriptions on different aspects of the protest experience, and I explore these existential themes through each interviewee's anecdotal accounts. In other words, each of the five participants embodies and exemplifies a particular

existential protesting theme or key overlapping themes as I render their lived experience using the dynamic accounts and stories of their various protesting activities they shared with me. In doing so, I try to remain as faithful to my participants' wording and use their own language as much as possible.

For example, in the next chapter I begin with Ron's descriptive accounts in theme I, Existential Crises and Activation. Here, Ron's stories disclose five distinct modes involved in doing protest as they emerge from his descriptions of being drawn to collective protest. As these modes, or means of experiencing collective protest, develop, I consider each from the concretely embodied corporeality from which they arise – this participant's lifeworld. As I advance this existential phenomenology of participating in collective protest, I work back and forth across the participant's discourse, noting commonalities and departures. For instance, if I refer back to one of Ron's emergent modes, say his second, I present this as (Ron.2 "obligation"). "Obligation" is a short-hand reference to the longer description of the mode embodied in Ron's understanding that participating in collective protest is an obligation. I demonstrate the unfolding quality of this interpretive activity in the following two chapters. Appendix G contains the full List of Existential Themes and Modes considered in this work.

The final stage of Step 4 involves "returning the research" to participants and sharing this work and my insights with interviewees to ensure they recognize themselves across my analysis, and that I have remained true ("authentic") to their experience (See Appendix H for my Letter Returning this Research to Participants). This is a practice Husserl includes in his phenomenology to strengthen qualitative rigor and to achieve well-qualified researcher abstraction. By ensuring that participants approve of the insights I glean from their discourse, I take care to affirm that I have not merely transposed my own views onto their descriptions of the

experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the study context, research questions, and methodological protocols guiding this dissertation on the experience of participating in collective protest. I survey phenomenology from Husserl, as well as some of the existential modifications performed by Heidegger and Sartre. I align my existential-phenomenological approach with Heidegger and Sartre's approaches to existential phenomenology as a hermeneutic "comparative method." This method ontologically presupposes that people exist as beings-in-the-world and lead concrete lives bound to unique and relational lifeworlds. Moreover, each life unfolds in cultural milieus constituted and compromised by the dynamic interplay of existential contingencies. Further, I describe my project design, participant recruitment efforts, and this dissertation's focus on five experienced protesters' diverse self-descriptions. My existential phenomenology method examines these five participants' descriptions of their collective protesting experiences throughout the next two analytic chapters.

Next, Chapter 3 begins this existential-phenomenological exploration of participating in collective protest.

CHAPTER 3

AN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF PARTICIPATING IN COLLECTIVE PROTEST: CRISIS, ACTIVATION, AND HORIZONS

Protests emerge as fluctuating sites of embodied activity that communicate and perform various senses of collective frustration, support, and community. The unfolding events of collective protest are spontaneous yet committed endeavors of participating with others in meaningful acts of rebellion. This chapter explores the existential journey of becoming a protester. As considered previously, protesting is an expansive phenomenon – dynamic, unique, and abstract – but it is also deeply personal, embodied, ethical, and relational. Chapter 3 features three participants who describe similar experiential arcs, ones often primed by an overwhelming sense of ethical disorder that rouses them to go out and go protest with others. For many people, the appeal of collective protest appears ethereal until it is actually "here," as it meets its own manifestly unrehearsed public performance of casting conspicuous shadows with other persons. Collective protesting animates an enigmatic potential for individuals who choose to become involved, an evocative capacity of people doing something together that embodies solidarity, until members eventually disband.

Chapter 2 detailed my study protocol including participant recruitment and interview procedures. I described existential phenomenology as a viable qualitative method for considering the experience of collective protest and located six general existential states of existence: self, other, embodiment, time, space, and choice/freedom. Chapter 3, the first of two analytical chapters, introduces the first three specific existential protest themes considered in this dissertation, as they are brought to life through interviewees' descriptions about their experiences participating in collective protest. This chapter follows three participants' individual narratives

about protesting with others and explores the shared existential themes of protest activation, collective magnification, and the affordances of freedom that I identified in their discourse. Beginning with Ron, followed by K and then Mr. Black, each theme reflects that interviewee's distinctive understandings concerning which aspects attract them to and characterize their experience of participating in collective protest. As such, these three themes exemplify the embodied experiences of these participants, with each thematic grouping containing five experiential modes. Overall, this chapter explores being drawn to protest and becoming a protester with others.

I begin by introducing the five participants who bring this experience of collective protest to life through their stories. I introduce each protester with minimal biographical details in order to protect their identities. I then share excerpts from their responses to my first two interview questions about community and relational ethics to provide some initial characterizations. Next, I consider the first existential theme of collective protest covered in this chapter, Existential Crises and Activation, as it arises from Ron's stories about losing friends to the Vietnam War. Following this, K's and Mr. Black's accounts explicate the second and third themes, Existential Magnification and Existential Horizons. My presentation of participants' descriptions about their unique experiences builds in complexity. Some accounts reveal similar characteristic features of collective protest. Meanwhile, others diverge along emotional, temporal, and relational conceptions of the experience. Thus, these protesters detail various resistance efforts which deviate yet overlap in meaningful ways.

Introducing Five Protesters: Guiding Values and Community Ethics

Here I introduce the five featured participants of this work by sharing their thoughts on ethics and community. All the interviews began with questions about participants' community

involvements and any overarching moral values they consider or practice in their interactions with other persons. (Please see Interviewee Questions in Appendix D.) This chapter opens with each interviewee's thoughts about community and ethics because I appreciate the distinct ways these considerations inform their unique standpoints. In particular, I value the ways their responses to these phenomenological questions exhibit how they view themselves in living relation to others. Each of these persons' practices of relational fidelity provide a fitting contextual backdrop for their various activist efforts. I follow each protester's self-description with a brief condensing summary. I order these introductions from the youngest to the oldest speaker, using their self-selected pseudonyms. Some participants willingly shared more personal details than others, and each interviewee gave their consent for me to include the general biographical details in the following introductions.

1. Catherine: A Responsibility to Educate Others

Catherine is a White 29-year-old bartender and social worker who lives and works in the small midwestern college town near where she was raised. Catherine's activism revolves around her commitment to environmentalism and, in particular, opposing efforts by the United States government to "steal" people's houses and lands through eminent domain for destructive fracking projects. Relatedly, during 2016 Catherine was heavily involved in the #NoDAPL[16] protest efforts at Standing Rock. I further explore her #NoDAPL involvement in my next chapter in a discussion of risk. Catherine actively opposes large-scale projects that prioritize capitalist profits above local Native peoples' access to clean water and their ability to maintain sovereignty over their family homes and lands. At the beginning of our interview (as in all of the interviews),

[16] #NoDAPL (No Dakota Access Pipeline) is/was a social media ("#" is its referential Twitter "hashtag") and protest movement that fought to prevent the construction of an oil pipeline through the sovereign lands of the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation in northwest North Dakota; for more on this, see the #NoDAPL Archive.

I ask her to tell me about her local community memberships, what this participation means to her, and how she exercises her ethical convictions towards others in the world. Catherine summarily explains:

> I think most people around here would probably say respect people and their views and their boundaries, but I think that if someone is very obviously an ignorant person – and by ignorant, I mean that they haven't been educated – not stupid – you can't fix stupid; stupid is stupid. You can educate ignorant and I think it is your responsibility to do so. Just like a Christian thinks it's their responsibility to convert someone, I think it is *my responsibility* to tell someone who doesn't know a truth that I know, the truth [. . .].
>
> If ignorance is allowed to triumph and persevere, things are not going to get better, they're going to continue getting worse. (*Catherine* 13:49; 14:44)

Catherine seemingly understands her ethical relationships with others as including a personal obligation to educate people about environmental issues that not only affect them but also imperil unknown others' livelihoods. Her pragmatic outlook seems fairly straightforward: the careless actions of a few people can have devasting long-term effects on others and our planet. Catherine ties ethics with her obligation to inform other people about the fragility of the environment and hopefully to convince some of them to join her in becoming self-aware protectionists. While some "ignorant" people can change their ways, Catherine sees the limits of knowledge when she encounters "stupid" people, because "you can't fix stupid; stupid is stupid." It seems Catherine understands stupidity as a stubborn mindset of somebody who, for example, knowingly performs actions that are detrimental to others and the environment – but they just do not care.

2. K: Most People are Good

K is an African American 30-year-old portrait photographer living in Raleigh, NC. K proudly consents for me to share her home locale: "I love North Carolina and especially living in Raleigh. Even though I wasn't born here, I consider this town my home." K describes how the values from her upbringing inform her ethical practices towards others:

> So, I come from . . .[17] I was raised to treat people a certain way, and I'm going to; I'm going to treat people good. I try to see the best in most people until they give me a reason to think otherwise. I don't know, man, I think I just feel like I've always lived by the idea that there's more good people in the world than bad, even though we only care about the "bad." Even people who do bad still have good in them, you know? Generally speaking, people are good, but I think they can be led astray. (*K* 6:51)

K describes her perspective of treating others with compassion and respect. She says, "most people are good," and exercises an active reflexivity in her respect for the mystery of others' interiority and unique experiences. She also seems to sense how vulnerable some people are to being "led astray," so she focuses on trying "to see the best in people."

Elsewhere in our interview, K mentions attending "every protest she can," supporting many causes including the Women's Marches, Black Lives Matter, Immigrant Lives Matter, The Science March, and March For Our Lives. She observes that, while she may never know why someone might be behaving like an "asshat" in one moment, she imagines that something detrimental may be happening to this person, and perhaps this is why they are being rude to her in "some" moment. K extends the olive branch of giving others the benefit of the doubt, keeping

[17] Three periods following a word without brackets indicates a pause or trailing-off in a participant's speech (". . ."). Please see Appendix F for a Performance/Transcription Key clarifying this and a few other punctuation effects I employ in my efforts to textually express interviewees' emotional and energized descriptive emphases.

the faith that even people "who do bad still have good in them." K does not morally totalize people as being "good" or "bad," but instead seems to pay more attention to their actions. She seems to believe in second chances and rehabilitation. In some ways, these ethical impulses resonate with Catherine's commitment to helping educate "ignorant" others, although K's outlook may include a bit more patience for "stupid" people.

3. Mikhail: *Counter Isolation and Search for Commonality*

Mikhail is a bakery worker who is in his 30s, White, and lives in a small town in the United States. He asks that I omit any identifying biographical details, and I honor this request. Mikhail describes his ethical activities as attempts at rectifying the sociocultural epidemic of isolation:

> One of the major problems that we experience as a symptom of the bigger problems that we experience today is a deep isolation [. . .]. People just think that they are alone in their lives and orient their lives in that way. And, I see my own, um, like . . . the way *I want to treat people* and the way I want to interact with people is about trying to counter that experience of *isolation*. Trying to put things in common – and put ourselves and our lives in common. And, in some ways, that means looking at difficulties that arise as opportunities to meet new people and to give them and myself ways to collaborate on something, or ways to build some sense of the power that comes when we cooperate. (*Mikhail* 4:23; 5:29)

Mikhail expresses a unifying collectivist perspective that hones his efforts to address society's "bigger problems" by "countering" a growing existential intensification of depression, loneliness, and isolation. In some of our talk covered later in Chapter 4, Mikhail expresses how he holds out hope that a social revolution of inclusion is on the horizon, and that it will rally

people to explore radical new ways of living together in a vastly different (and very possible) egalitarian future.

4. Mr. Black: As Long as It's not Unethical, Illegal, or Immoral, I Don't Mind Doing It

Mr. Black is a 51-year-old Army veteran and father who currently works in admissions and recruitment at a university somewhere in the United States. He tells me about growing up as a "Black child of the 60s," and witnessing the police use violence against peaceful Civil Rights protesters. Mr. Black relates that, early on in his life, he realized he had "to play the game" if he wanted to become successful in a culture so heavily tainted and structured by White supremacy. "Playing the game," he explains, involves actively ignoring the daily onslaught of bigotry and racism he experiences – even today, while working at an institution of higher education. Mr. Black responds to my question about his guiding ethical values:

> Well, I've just got a philosophy. I had a boss one time that I couldn't stand, but he would always say, "As long as it's not unethical, illegal, immoral," he doesn't mind doing it. I agree [. . .]. Just know that if you feel yourself going down that bad path that you need to just . . . you're going to be held accountable – that's what I tell my students. You live by the sword, you die by the sword. (*Mr. Black* 7:20; 8:55)

Mr. Black appears to hinge his ethics on the importance of following rules and not breaking laws. Interestingly, he shares his guiding mantra that he picked up from a former boss he strongly disliked. Post-military, Mr. Black now works in university recruitment. He tells me his passion is helping to mentor and guide young people – especially first-generation college students of color – through the rigorous academic challenges of completing an undergraduate pre-medical degree. Elsewhere in our interview, Mr. Black says his greatest future hope is for people of color to not have to "play the game" as hard as he has had to do in his own life. He

insists, “It’s time to change the game.”

5. Ron: The Golden Rule is a Good Place to Start

Ron is a White 67-year-old retired textile salesman who is married to his high school sweetheart and lives on the East Coast. A proud father of two adult children and beaming grandfather of four, Ron tells me that family and community mean “*everything*” to him. Ron responds without hesitation about his ethical convictions:

> I think that the Golden Rule is a good place to start: do unto others as you’d have them do unto you. I find the Bible is a good guidebook. I don’t proselytize; I’m not overly religious – I go to church on occasion, but I think the guidelines set out there are good and are very livable. I also think the way I was raised also plays a big role in that [. . .].
>
> I was raised in a family where you treated everyone with respect, regardless of race, color, or creed. You went out of your way to help others that couldn’t help themselves and you strived to be the best you, you can be. (*Ron* 3:30; 4:01)

Many people may recognize the “Golden Rule” from biblical teachings. In the Bible, Matthew 7:12 prescribes a model of ethical conduct that encourages individuals to treat others in the same manner they wish to be treated.[18] Ron mentions that he is not “overly religious” but he does find this reciprocity to be a “very livable” doctrine. It strikes me as important to note that Ron views the effort of treating “everyone with respect” as factoring in a willingness to go “out of your way to help others that [can’t] help themselves.” Ron’s adherence to the Golden Rule and readiness to help others seems quite congruent with the experience of attending protests.

I have introduced these five dedicated protesters at the heart of this work and have shared some of their personal and community-related ethical convictions. Catherine suggests that she

[18] Matthew 7:12: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you: do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”; for more, see *The Bible*.

feels a responsibility to educate others in order to liberate them from ignorance (i.e., not-knowing; stupidity is knowing and not caring). K believes that the majority of people are good and extends this optimistic light to all members of humanity. Mikhail's ethical energies focus on sparking communal connections across people with the hopes of relieving the modern pathologies of loneliness and isolation. Mr. Black appears to be agreeable to most requests from others, as long as they are not "unethical, immoral, or illegal." Finally, Ron follows the Golden Rule's praxis of mutual respect and treats others as he wishes to be treated in return. All five participants share beliefs that exhibit common themes about the importance of community, recognizing others, and acting with compassion.

Exploring Protester's Accounts: Activation, Magnification, and Horizons

Now, I begin my existential-phenomenological exploration of my participants' descriptions of what their involvement in collective protest is and means to them. The five themes organizing this work reflect overarching existential-phenomenological themes that emerged from participants' narratives about their experiences in protest. I consider participants' accounts of their distinct protesting activities in relation to the six basic, general, or universal states of existence that I identified in the previous chapter: self, other, embodiment, time, space, and choice/freedom. Throughout my phenomenological explications of participants' distinct modes of experiencing collective protest, I attend to the ways my interviewees describe their various involvements in concrete and contingent terms. That is, I consider each participant's embodied protest activities in five primary *existential themes of participating in collective protest* (I, II, III, IV, V). These five themes arose in relation to the ways my participants discussed the *phenomenological modes (manners)* in which they experience the dynamic and *constitutive interplay of the six basic, general, or universal states of existence (self, other, body,*

time, space, and choice/freedom). As I consider each collective protest theme, I describe an array of modes that depict how the interviewee performs that theme and makes it meaningful. This work considers the six general existential states to be constitutive and contingent overlapping forces of existence that bear the weight of consequence and imbue the phenomenological experience of collective protest with meaning. As such, each of the five themes discussed in this work explicates a participant's emergent modes indicative of how they experience their participation in collective protest.

I will present in this chapter three existential themes that shaped and reflected how interviewees discussed their experiences of collective protest. These three existential themes involved in the experience of collective protest are: I Existential Crises and Activation; II Existential Magnification; and III Existential Horizons. Theme I: Existential Crises and Activation revolves around Ron's early experiences attending protests during the Vietnam War. As I engage with Ron's descriptions, five distinct modes emerge concerning some of Ron's preceding emotional-phenomenal sensations that drive him to take action. Other modes address the manners in which he experiences protest with others. As I work across each of the five themes and respective involved participants, I consider thematic and modal variations of their particular experiences even as I cross-reference and comparatively synthesize commonalities and departures. In other words, I am interested in considering how these participants experience their protest lifeworlds in both similar and distinct manners.

With regard to formatting, the guiding existential themes, such as I: Existential Crises and Activation, will initially be introduced in accordance with MLA formatting as a heading in bolded text (**Theme I: Existential Crises and Activation**), and subsequently referenced by the name of the participant voicing these various modes of the thematized experience – in this case,

it is Ron. Each theme includes various modes depending on how participants discuss the experience at hand. For ease of identification, each mode is numbered following the name of the participant (experiencer) – e.g., Ron #1. As I unpack in detail the nuances informing this existential phenomenology analysis, I will refer back to previous themes and modes, integrating these understandings with other participants' accounts to provide co-voiced representations of the protest experience. When I do reference a previous theme and/or mode, it will look like this: (Ron.1) – that is, theme I (Ron) and Ron's mode #1. For further ease of reference, I also will provide keyword descriptions of each mode, for example, Ron.1 "crises". Please see Appendix G for a complete list of the themes and modes I consider in this dissertation.

Now, I turn to theme I, which is drawn from Ron's reflections on protesting during the Vietnam War era. He provides intimate details concerning an array of cultural, ethical, and emotional forces that prompted him to take action in this way.

Theme I: Existential Crises and Activation (Ron)

This first existential theme concerning the experience of collective protest explores some of the ways that cultural and social factors influence a person to become a protester. Below, Ron reflects on the Vietnam War era.[19] Following his story, I present the first two modes of theme I.

> Once I got to college, the War in Vietnam[20] was raging and it was a really big deal! We were watching people flunk out and then get harvested either by the war or in the war. They'd get drafted – my best friend in high school – the guy who helped me make the lamp I made in high school when I was in 10th grade, went to Salisbury [High School]

[19] The Vietnam War officially endured for twenty years (1955-1975), although there are reports that Vietnamese citizens commonly refer to the conflict as "The American War"; for more on these disparate cultural perspectives see Lawrence ii.

[20] It is estimated that nearly two million Vietnamese people perished during the war – this includes civilians and fighters on both sides of the country's inner conflict; the US reports that at least 58,200 members of their armed forces died in the war; see Spector par. 3.

> and he was two years ahead of me, and was killed. Johnny Thompson, one of my best friends in high school, when he graduated, he went to war and I went to college. He came back, but he was never the same. I struggled a great deal and had *real* problems with the Vietnam War, and when I got on campus I started protesting with other protesters on campus. So, I've always felt that there was a *need* for protest, and beyond that, I feel that there's an *obligation* to make sure that your position's known and being willing to go out of your way to reflect your position on things.[21] (*Ron* 6:05)

Ron #1: *Times of Cultural Crisis – "He went to war and I went to college"*

Ron describes attending college during the Vietnam War while realizing the profound impact his status as a student has had on his life. During the Vietnam War college students were exempt from the draft.[22] Ron grasps the magnitude of this privilege that likely spared his life. This first mode speaks to the ever-presence of sociocultural contexts accentuating or diminishing various cultural happenings. Ron details how certain periods of time, such as wartime, can be particularly rife with feelings of existential devastation. Ron explains that he "struggled a great deal and had real problems with the war." Even Ron's partner on his high school lamp project is "harvested" in the war – and his light forever extinguished. Ron portrays a devastating comparison of life trajectories; with himself safe at college, his friend Johnny heads off to war. Johnny survives but "was never the same." This first mode (Ron.1 "crisis") reflects how protests tend to emerge when persons tangibly experience periods of drastic cultural and social upheaval.

[21] I have changed the names of any unfamiliar people mentioned by participants in order to protect their identities and personal privacy.

[22] First conducted during the Korean War, the US Selective Service required all male US citizens, aged 18 and older, to report to their local draft boards for classification; college enrollment delayed/deferred this draft conscription, for more, see Card and Lemieux 97.

Ron #2: *Activation – A Need and an Obligation to Protest*

Ron explains that the violence and mass death occurring in the Vietnam War hits close to home as he loses one best friend, and a second close friend returns home forever changed by his warfare experiences. These casualties are anything but casual for Ron. The powerlessness and permanence of the Vietnam War's effects on his friends' lives motivate Ron to get out and protest. Ron explains that his impulse to protest serves a "need" he felt. This "need" possibly pulls Ron toward other people who empathize with him, who also may be mourning others, and/or may be similarly outraged over the careless "harvest" of so many unsuspecting and often underprivileged young people.

Ron explains that he believes there is both a "need" for and "obligation" to protest. Perhaps Ron feels some guilt about his privileged access to college while many young men from his generation without this access are "harvested" in a thinly justified and imprudent war. As the death toll of the Vietnam War rapidly escalates, Ron and thousands of other sympathetic people seek something they can do to fight on behalf of these innocent lives (Ron.1 "crisis"). In other words, Ron is exercising his *freedom/choice* to join a group of *others* to work on behalf of still more *others*. Perhaps Ron initially protested to cope with his grief over his friends' deaths or ruined lives, but his involvement intensifies as his activism evolves from a nascent "need" to do *something* into an "obligation" to *sustain* anti-war efforts and spare soldiers' lives (Ron.2 "obligation"). Ron refers back to the ethical mobility of the Golden Rule when he says, "I feel that there's an *obligation* to make sure that your position's known and being willing to go out of your way to reflect your position on things." This idea of reflecting on positions and making them manifest appears in a number of upcoming modes in theme II, which I also explore in greater depth in the next chapter.

The first two modes considered here illustrate the important role that cultural crises play in the genesis of many protest movements (Ron.1 "crisis"). Further, as Ron details, a "need" to take action can evolve into a sense of "obligation" to humanity (Ron.2). Next, Ron shares a story about going to see William Kunstler[23] speak at a rally at the University of Virginia in 1970:

> It *can* make a difference. You know, before Kunstler spoke there was this other guy who said, "If you got a low number or if you need to leave the country if you want to avoid the draft, we've got people here who will help you do paperwork. We can help you get to Canada, buh duh dah . . ." and so on. The informal underground organization – it was all there. It was, it was really a very cool thing, and I guess I was . . . I realized . . . that I felt it was important that I was there, but you realized how others were willing to do *more* and really make an effort, and really organize something. You don't just say, "I can help you get out of the country" – you have to arrange that. You have to figure out what paperwork you need to do *to get out of the country*. And what you *need* to change citizenship and *have* them available. So, there were others that were just *much more proactive* and thought-provoking and *doing* something about it. It was pretty impressive. (*Ron* 13:21)

Ron #3: *The Informal Underground Organization Was All There*

Ron recollects his participation in an anti-Vietnam War event at the University of Virginia. He recalls overhearing a man tell the crowd, "If you got a low number or if you need to leave the country if you want to avoid the draft, we've got people here who will help you do paperwork. We can help you get to Canada." Ron reflects on how this moment reveals to him the

[23] William Kunstler was a charismatic attorney who famously successfully defended the "Chicago Seven," a group of men who were arrested for conspiring to incite riots in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic Convention; for more on this, see "William Moses Kunstler."

organizational sophistication such risky endeavors involve. Most people, including myself, probably have no clue how to navigate the legal labyrinth of institutional paperwork necessary to physically "get out of the country." Ron expresses appreciation for the courage and dedication of these underground people, hard at work behind the scenes trying to give strangers with "a low number" a chance to survive. Ron describes a strikingly reflexive qualitative difference between *his* role as a protester in attendance, and some of the other "more proactive" volunteers putting their own lives in jeopardy to help others escape being "harvested" by their own country. I cannot imagine how terrifying it must have been to have "a low number" in the draft lottery during those years – living each day knowing that the United States Selective Service might be coming for me – that is, once enough people with other low numbers have died in a senseless war. As Ron shares above, many people attend protests to learn more about and experience what exactly people are protesting, what is at stake, and for whom.

Ron's third narrative describes his attendance at the 2017 Women's March on Washington:

> It's kinda a neat thing, because you look at the array of people that felt so compelled, so driven, by such a *despicable* thing occurring, that they *want* to express themselves. There's a drive to express themselves, and it's not a casual effort. So, that fires you up – at least it fires *me* up to get there. And when you get there – I think anytime you're surrounded by like-minded people who identify with you and identify strongly enough that they step out of their active lives to dedicate time to a protest, it's just extraordinarily energizing! And I do think there's an electricity in the air that just, just bonds the whole group. It's better than going to a good sporting event! [. . .]
>
> I'm satisfied to be a dot on an aerial picture of the protest, but I think the fact that

> I was there and filled that spot, is worth it. It's important to me. Because you've filled out the field, you've shown there are more people there – coulda stayed home, didn't. So, it's a very satisfied feeling. (*Ron* 32:44; 35:15)

Ron #4: *There's an Electricity in the Air with Like-Minded People*

Ron's account highlights insights associated with modes #1 and #2 that describe how "*despicable* things" compel him and others to "*want* to express themselves." There are two key interrelated features to unpack in mode #4: "like-minded people" and "electricity in the air." Several interviewees referred to their co-protesters as "like-minded people." Ron in turn describes like-minded others as those "who identify with you and identify strongly enough that they step out of their active lives to dedicate time to a protest." As such, like-mindedness points to an experience *of and with* other people that emanates a sense of familiarity as it resonates with communally demonstrated dispositions and values. Many people come together in protest to express their opposition as a collective. As a result, protest has the participatory potential to convert stranger-others into mutually acknowledged participants working together to create a conspicuous presence. Ron observes that this activity "is not a casual effort," because it takes considerable time and energy to attend protests. Thus, protesting is a *choice* each individual makes for themselves – nobody is forced into it. Ron finds it "extraordinarily energizing" to be around other protesters with similar principles as these collaborative gatherings consolidate their embodied presence.

When engaging in protest, Ron feels "an electricity in the air that just bonds the whole group." His account suggests this bond is activated by being "here" right "now" and transcends many typical temporal and spatial expectations of becoming acquainted with others. Rather, these activist encounters unveil an initial apprehension about unknown others as people

cooperate together as like-minded conductors of ethical energy. This collective embodiment becomes the "there" (*here*) Ron is "fired-up" to arrive at. Protests materialize as people lend their bodies and time to causes that feel righteous and larger than any one person can address alone. In Ron's view, being part of this "energizing" unity is more exciting "than a good sporting event." Perhaps protest is more pleasurable for Ron than a sports event because it is not about winning or losing but rather about actively expressing collective solidarity. While there are always risks of participating, which I address below, participants experience this edifying activity as a kind of unrehearsed dance. Ron's mode #3 (Ron.3 "underground org.") portrays human groupings largely in anonymous terms that draw dedicated members together to take joint action. By comparison, Ron.4 ("like-minded") recognizes positive attributes and illustrates the powerful capacity of collective protest to manifest common grounds on which the bonds of mutual respect and shared political concerns can build into a reflective experience of cooperative affirmation.

Ron #5: *I'm Happy to be an Aerial Dot Filling Out the Field*

Ron's mode #5 considers the visual spectacle of one's embodied conjunction of *being there* (at a protest) in concert with throngs of others. Each protester body figures into the production of a mass-peopled happening. While the previous mode (Ron.4 "like-minded) describes the ground level experience of protesting with others, mode #5 zooms out from the relational space of protest to become Ron's imagined "aerial picture" of his body as "a dot." It takes *a lot of people* to blur the distinctions of separate bodies, but Ron seems to appreciate the optical totality of his snug presence alongside others. This field of people is a twofold demonstration: it is performed with one's body in protest with others, and this mass assemblage manifests a remarkable visual spectacle that others who are not present might see. Persons at home or in other places may appreciate witnessing the remarkable presence of committed beings

who have made the effort to attend and contribute to a larger cultural picture. This macro or externalized perspective of collective protest is not the central focus of this project. But I include it here because Ron experiences his participation on the ground as he simultaneously appreciates this opportunity to visually communicate to others the ethical message of the day through the powerful impressions being embodied and created, blurring aerial dots – human pixels – into one image of solidarity for others to take notice.

Theme I comprises several of Ron's existential-phenomenological modes reflecting how many people are stimulated to become protesters. People seem to feel compelled to take action during periods of heightened cultural discord (Ron.1 "crisis"; Ron.2 "obligation"). Many protest movements and public gatherings have complex underground activist networks hard at work to sustain and address the specific needs of the cause (Ron.3 "underground org."). Protest activities can be energizing embodied experiences of occupying public spaces with others who transcend their "stranger" statuses through their participation in like-minded collective demonstrations (Ron.4 "like-minded"). These unfolding events, feelings, and perceived exigencies of persons' lived experiences of collective involvement and transcendence are the inspired existential terrain this dissertation explores.

Ron's descriptions disclose a visual-experiential conjunction of his body in cooperation with other protester bodies as they create a massive visual demonstration of shared passions and presence (Ron.4 "like-minded"; Ron.5 "aerial dot"). The visual significance of such sizeable numbers of protesters may make its way elsewhere, perhaps reaching others in their homes through TV or video (Ron.5 "aerial dot"). Theme I begins this examination of collective protest by highlighting the existential interplay of embodiment, others, time, emotion, and visuality as key components that shape and give meaning to the collective experience of protest. These

activating elemental thematic modalities maintain a presence throughout this work.

The second existential theme of participating in collective protest illuminates the vibrant interchange of voice, visibility, and collective amplification.

Theme II: Existential Magnification: Voice, Visibility, and One Large Body (K)

The second theme follows K through her protest stories. The first two modes in this section unfold as K describes the rage she feels after Donald Trump's election victory:

> I think I needed somebody to hear that I was angry, which I was. And then, I think it was also the fact that – and I pride myself on this – um, I don't march only for the things that I care about. So, if you're not gonna answer me and you're not going to listen to what I have to say as an individual, then I'm gonna join this mass of people and you're *gonna have to answer us as a group* [. . .].
>
> Um, so, it wasn't necessarily feeling like I needed something to do as much as it felt like it was something that is a necessity. And it was a right that my ancestors – whether they were women or Black or Black women – fought to be able to do and *died*. Why would *I* take that for granted? This is my right as an American citizen to, you know, get together with this other group of people that feel exactly the same way that I do. (*K* 18:45; 19:52)

K mirrors a bit of my own protest story from Chapter 1 in our shared agony over Trump's astonishing presidential victory. In fact, during our interview we excitedly realize that we were both part of the Women's March on Washington back in early 2017. The next mode explores K's emotional wrenching that my other interviewees frequently mention as precipitating their protest involvements (Ron.2 "obligation"). K's descriptions also echo Ron's earlier discussion linking existential crises with protesting (Ron.1 "crisis").

K #6: *I Needed Somebody to Hear that I Was Angry*

K begins her reflection in contemplation of why she felt so driven to protest after the election. K ponders aloud, "I think I needed somebody to hear that I was angry." In my judgment, there are at least five revelatory semantic components arranged in this statement – I "think" I "needed," "somebody," to "hear," that "I was angry." First, it seems that K is so alarmed by Trump's devastating surprise win that she is possibly unprepared to even "know" what she "thinks" she needs. This is an existential crisis (Ron.1 "crisis"). Considering that our interview takes place about eight months after the march, it is interesting that she is still a bit foggy about what she thinks she "needed" before the march. (I share in the bewilderment of this pre-experience as well, so I understand.) Yet as K progresses through her narrative, it is quickly evident to me that she is a skillful narrator; she is thoughtful and detailed in synthesizing descriptions of her thoughts, feelings, and body with confident ease. K is a portrait photographer, and perhaps her work helps her to attend to the "bigger picture" she experiences.

K indicates that she thinks she needed "somebody" "to hear" her. "Somebody" is an interesting semantic choice that, to me, typically connotes an unidentified "other with a body" – who hopefully also can hear in this case. The frantic calling-for-help-from-a-pit trope comes to mind: "Can somebody, anybody, hear me?" Some/body; any/body; every/body; no/body. "Nobody" is an impossible and uninhabitable existential slot, but all of the other possible variations have a sense of reaching outward, for help from other people – apparently without known names or group identifications – that is, strangers. Perhaps K is seeking ("needing") a different image of reality than the one she newly inhabits with Trump as the president-elect. I have felt similarly. In other words, literally overnight, the mundane comforts and taken-for-granted expectation of a decent and familiar world disappeared from view in many ways. In my

story from Chapter 1, I reflect on my own strife – how I felt so full of rage that I even viewed neighbors and strangers with suspicion. Everyone appeared guilty because this man was now installed as president, was emboldened, had access to the most deadly and consequential information in the world, and was/is crooked as hell. I sense that K and I share feelings during and about this time. Actually, I know we do and did because we have talked about it briefly. It seems that we both need to *perceive* other sympathetic faces hearing us to cope with our anger.

K, along with most of the other 16 participants I interviewed, references the importance of "having one's voice heard" at protests. The more I think about the idea of "voices being heard," the more I realize that I do not think anyone at the numerous protests I have attended has specifically heard *my* voice at all. Something I do participate in that is always fun and electrifying is the *chanting*. K says, "So, if you're not gonna answer me and you're not gonna listen to what I have to say as an individual, then I'm gonna join this mass of people and you're *gonna have to answer us as a group*."

K #7: *If You won't Listen to Me, Now You're Gonna Have to Answer Us as a Group*

K taps into the collective power of a "mass of people," knowing full well that "today, you gotta do it with the numbers." K is a seasoned protester, proudly sharing that she "doesn't only march for the things" she cares about. Similar to Ron (Ron.2 "obligation"), K views protest as "a necessity" as well as her "right as an American citizen. Why would I take that for granted?" She contemplates her ancestors and the many sacrifices they made and the hard lives they must have led – "whether they were women or Black or Black women" – they "fought" for K "to be able to [protest and vote] and *died*." It is almost as if K extends her fondness for feeling connected back through time, carrying the weight of her dead ancestors' mysteries as she walks the streets with others. K seems to find collective protest to be empowering and cathartic (K.6 "hear my anger"),

embracing its solidarity and efficacy. When K feels ignored (unheard), she seeks to join with other affected comrades to amplify her voice – to have it heard. K is one of the most active protesters I interviewed for this project. She keeps her eyes open and her voice warm because she is ready to march anywhere, anytime, for any worthy cause that needs her support. I revisit collectivity and people-power in mode #9 as well as in the next chapter. The next mode revolves around a haunting story from K.

K #8: *That Was Life or Death for Him*

> We did just go to an Immigrant Lives Matter protest in Raleigh [NC] at Halifax Mall and heard a story of a young guy who was about to get picked up by ICE – he was picked up. And he's gay, and he's like, "I'm gonna die. I'm gonna die if I get sent back." And ICE picked him up the next day. And to see an entire community of people who didn't know this kid, like we were coddling him. And we were writing representatives, harassing ICE to get this kid released. And I don't know what came of him. But think about it – like, if that was your last thing, wouldn't you do it? I would do it. I would *beg*, *I would beg and plead*. That was life or death for him. It's . . . I mean, it's *heavy*; it's crazy, *but it's heavy*. (*K* 48:11)

This is a truly chilling story. It is difficult for many to imagine how easy it might be to disappear. K describes the scene of a young man on a deportation list giving a speech at an Immigration Rights rally in Raleigh. The young man knows the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)[24] is hunting him, but rather than hide, he stands squarely at the epicenter of danger to tell K and 10,000 others his story. In an unbelievably courageous act, the young man sacrifices himself, offering up his body in exchange for the truth about his fate. If the

[24] www.ice.gov

young man knows he will be killed for being gay, surely, he is aware of other brothers and sisters who have come and gone before him. As K describes, she and the other attendees are horrified by the imminent danger this young man faces, yet there he is, standing right in front of them. K tells me that she did not think it was possible for this young man to disappear now that the entire Raleigh activist community has seen him, heard his words, and were deploying their vast resources and extensive networks of immigration lawyers and experts. But he disappears the following day when "ICE picked him up."

K explains how the Raleigh community bands together with a shared sense of urgency, "coddling" the significance of this man's life. K seems incredulous as she describes all the efforts she and fellow activists undertake, but he vanishes anyway, without any trace of "what came of him." For me, what makes this story especially devastating is K's confidence that the young man is telling her truth ("I'm gonna die"), that ICE is telling him the truth ("We're gonna deport you, then you're gonna die"), and that now he probably is dead. K clinches the heartbreaking turmoil of this episode in questioning, "But think about it – like, if that was your last thing, wouldn't you do it? I would do it. I would *beg, I would beg and plead*. That was life or death for him. It's . . . I mean, it's *heavy*; it's crazy, *but it's heavy*." Yes, I would absolutely beg and plead for *my life*. This is a story of mortality and morality. And yes, oh yes, it is both heavy and crazy to the fullest absurd extent that the forces of homophobia and xenophobia and ICE possess the power to transmute his life sentence here into a death sentence somewhere else. They have blood on their ICEY hands, and definitely not for the first time.[25]

This young man's story is achingly powerful, devastating, and mysterious. Each time I

[25] ICE records show that between October 2003 and May 2017, 172 people died while in their custody, see US "List of Deaths in ICE Custody." To date (Jan. 2020), ICE currently reports 16 detainee deaths in 2018 and 2019; for more on this, see US "Death Detainee Report."

read it, the shadowy depths of my sorrow for him intensify. It is stories like this young man's that show us who and what we ought to be as people. Do we live in a country that knowingly and clandestinely deports vulnerable humans to places where they will most certainly be murdered or harmed? We must not conspire with countries who damn a person because of who they love. In a world bursting with all kinds of lovable people, can we not find it in our souls to spare this young man's life? This practice is existential damnation of the highest order from arguably the most powerful "moral" imperialists on the planet – the United States. K's story in mode #8 conveys a dangerous truth about what is at stake for many vulnerable immigrants in this country, and especially at this time (in 2019). It reinforces the important realization that some people are not safe in this country. *It's heavy; it's crazy, but it's heavy*.

Next is K's third and final narrative describing her three favorite things about protesting:

> My favorite thing is the sense of community and being one large body versus having to fight as an individual. And knowing that you're not the only person who's like, "This is crazy, right?!" [. . .]. Second, was the chanting. Do you remember that they had just opened that new Trump Tower [D.C. Hotel] downtown? [*ME*: "Oh yeah!"] So as soon as everyone got to it, just the "BOO's!" – hearing that many people "BOO" at one time was just soo fucking awesome! [. . .].
>
> And then the CDS[26] was like five stories up, and there were people holding, like toilet paper in the windows, like, "Yeaaaahhh!" just rooting everybody on! And the bleachers that were there for the Inauguration that they didn't fill up – people were filling the

[26] CDS (Capability Development Support) is a government agency housed in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that works "to ensure programs and systems reduce or mitigate the challenges [DHS addresses] in the safest, most efficient and most cost-effective manner," see "About Capability Development Support" for more.

bleachers. We have pictures of it. (*K* 49:44; 54:12; 54:48)

K #9: *Having One Large Body to Fight With*

K shares that her favorite part of protesting is the "sense of community and being one large body versus having to fight as an individual." When K participates in protest with others, she knows she is in the company of persons who share her values and frustrations, and perhaps this is what community means today (Ron.4 "like-minded"). Perhaps in the past communities arose from more concretely geographic contexts, forming as neighbors and others living nearby share backyard barbeques, church, and school events. Today it seems the rising polarization of bipartisan politics is eroding the ease of forming local relationships, as each political party swallows up opposing versions of morality. But K knows where to find her people. She describes a metamorphosing phenomenon as participants around her convert into "one large body." This empowered feeling is similar to the pleasurable satisfaction Ron feels being "an aerial dot filling out the picture" (Ron.5). K values the solidarity that other protesters' presence affirms – they also seem to think, "*this is crazy*" (Ron.4 "like-minded").

K's second favorite aspect of protesting is "the chanting." This relates back to the previous mode of needing to feel heard (K.6 "hear my anger"). While protests do seem to propagate around collective outrage over discriminatory policies, K and other participants describe that, "once you get there," the mood is uplifting (Ron.4 "like-minded"; K.7 "civic duty/group power"). Trading on solidarity and affirmation, protesters unify into "one large body" that feels more powerful than "fighting as an individual" (K.8 "death for him"). As K mentioned earlier, she was *angry*, and it pumps her up to see people "booing" loudly outside the newly constructed Trump Hotel. Chanting, booing, and striding together as a communally-knit organic being reassure K that "you're not the only one" (Ron.4 "like-minded; Ron.5 "aerial dot"; K.6

"hear my anger"; K.7 "civic duty/group power").

K #10: *They Were Rooting Us On from Five Stories Up!*

K is excited to see CDS (Capability Development Support, see footnote 26) government workers five stories up showing their support with whatever materials they have on hand – "holding toilet paper in the windows." It is interesting that K notices these people. There is a mirrored exchange, here, as the CDS workers cheer on K and the other demonstrators, and the protesters on the ground see these active workers and celebrate their participation, too. Although these CDS employees have to work on this day, they are in protest, using toilet paper to make sure that the protesters know that they, too, support the cause. K tells me how she and several others waved and gave the CDS protesters thumbs-up gestures as they passed by. She says that, even though they were five stories up, she can still see them bouncing with excitement at their windows, seemingly delighted at being seen and feeling included.

This visual interchange reminds me of Ron's point that he is happy to be a "dot on an aerial plane" for others to see (Ron.5). In this case of the CDS workers, K and the other protesters are more than dots to these employees, and these employees are more than individuals at their office window; they have all become part of one large vocalizing body (K.9 "one large body"; K.6 "hear my anger"). Along with the importance of seeing and being seen, voicing, being heard, and hearing others, K notes that she passes the empty bleachers still up from Trump's inauguration the day before, but this time, "people were filling the bleachers." K adds, "We have pictures of it." This is probably in response to the Trump Administration's false claims that his previous day's speech had the highest attendance in history.[27] Aerial pictures from

[27] While it is difficult to calculate precise numbers of people in large groups, crowd scientists estimate that Trump's inauguration attendance was around one-third of the size of President Obama's first inauguration, see Wallace et al. for more about this.

Trump's inaugural speech showed empty bleachers, but on *this day*, K has photographic proof that *people are here*. As a photographer, K seems visually attuned to the various sights of the day – from five stories up to the distant bleachers down in the Memorial Mall.

In theme I: Existential Crises and Activation, Ron's descriptions reveal that protests emerge during times of cultural turmoil because many people feel lost and alone (Ron.1 "crisis"). At protests, it feels energizing to be with others who care enough to show up (Ron.4 "like-minded"). Protest is a visual-experiential conjunction of both being there with other protesters and collaborating on the construction of a larger visual spectacle for others (Ron.5 "aerial dot"). Theme II: Existential Magnification continues this existential examination through K's experiences of participating in collective protest and illustrates the essential roles that voice, visibility, and the number of attendees play in realizing protest. Mode #6 follows K's anger as a driving force behind her desire to express and voice her frustration, a shared catalyst sparking many persons to join protests (K.6 "hear my anger"). Mode #7 traces the need for K to exercise her voice a step further – in considering the amplification of collective voices as a way to actualize one's sense of giving voice and feeling "heard" (K.7 "civic duty/group power").

In mode #8, K tells a story about a young man who risked his life to tell his story at an Immigration Lives Matter rally. Undeterred by fear, his voice *was heard* by many on that day (possibly for the last time). This story captures the danger of speaking out that many people face in this country as well as abroad. As K says, "That was life or death for him." The young man's brave speech may mean "death for him," but the awareness he brings to 10,000 onlookers accentuates the importance of holding ICE and other complicit United States departments accountable for the lives of asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants. Mode #9 addresses K's powerful experience of being with other protesters and coming together to form "one large

body." Finally, mode #10 explores some of the reflective, perceivable properties of protesting, illustrating the collaborative achievement of protesters looking out as others gaze back, exemplifying the central role relational visuality plays in these demonstrations.

In the final existential theme of this chapter, Mr. Black's narratives focus on the importance of having the freedom to express dissent, in contrast with some other countries where people are forced to conceal their grievances.

Theme III: Existential Horizons: Freedom, Showing, and Hiding (Mr. Black)

In Mr. Black's first narrative of theme III, he considers protest as he reflects on his past experiences of living abroad in Eastern Asia and in the Middle East.

> A good thing I like about protesting is the privileges of being an American when you protest. I've lived all over the world; I've lived in countries where you have to hide . . . I've lived in Thailand and taught there, I've lived in Kuwait, I've lived in Qatar, um, and there's countries on this planet where you open your mouth, you say something against the King, or the Emir, or the Sheik, or whatever, and you gonna be . . . you gonna disappear [. . .].
>
> Before I was into religion, I would be shakin' in my boots, but now, I don't fear that anymore. I don't fear protesting – especially if it's for a great cause. You *have* to stand. Back in the 1960s those people were getting spit on and kicked, and police dogs released on them – they didn't fear that, that actually gave em' energy, you know? It *made* them. It reinforced that what they were doing was good. (*Mr. Black* 14:47; 28:52)

The first mode in theme III concerns the freedom to demonstrate.

Mr. Black #11: *In some Countries You Have to Hide*

Throughout Mr. Black's interview, he frequently references "showing" and "hiding" in

relation to democratic ideals and his upbringing during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Mode #11 draws from Mr. Black's extensive military service abroad while he was in the Army. Near the beginning of our interview, Mr. Black tells me that he is happy to help students like me with their research projects because he believes "the truth" should come out. I ask Mr. Black to please clarify what he means by "the truth," and he goes a step further in telling me, "Those are your best people. If you want to get *good research,* find former people who was with the government. Because they are *ready* to talk. *They're ready*. This is supposed to help a bigger picture one day." Mr. Black explains that, during his time in the Army, he was barred from talking about many of the unbelievable things he witnessed. True to his own words, Mr. Black is generous with his time and descriptions and certainly is "ready to talk."

Mr. Black tells me about his service in various Middle Eastern countries where people lack the protections afforded in a democracy. He explains he has lived in "countries where you have to hide" your dissent. Mr. Black warns of the perils of speaking out in autocratic societies headed by kings, emirs, sheiks, "or whatever" such leaders are called. Voice and feeling heard (K.6 "hear my anger"; K.7 "civic duty/group power") are central to the protesting project, and Mr. Black observes that in some countries if "you open your mouth" to say anything against the leadership, "you gonna disappear." This is why Mr. Black appreciates "the privileges of being an American when you protest." K shares this respect for the freedom to exercise her voice, considering it her civic duty to vote, protest, and speak out when things feel wrong (K.6 "hear my anger"; K.8 "death for him"; Ron.2 "obligation"). During our talk, Mr. Black mentions several times that he worries that younger generations will not remember (or learn about) how horribly cruel life has been for people of color in the past – namely during Jim Crow and slavery. (In many ways, second-class citizenship for people of color continues today.) Mode #11

emphasizes the necessity of having the freedom to dissent and voice one's opinion without risking violent repercussions. This brings us to the next mode of this theme concerning history, violence, fear, and strength.

Mr. Black #12: *They didn't Fear that Violence, It* Made *Them*

Mr. Black's discourse jumps back and forth through time, comparing and contrasting various cultures and time periods with his own transitioning mindsets. When I ask him about risk and protest, he references the infamously violent policing tactics used against Civil Rights demonstrators: fire hoses, tear gas, "getting spit on and kicked, and police dogs released on them." To use another term, we can call this dehumanization. Mr. Black astutely observes that, although police try to intimidate these protesters with violence and fear, their methods fail miserably. He remembers being a kid watching Civil Rights protesters on his TV set in Chicago, seeing people with his same skin color being brutalized by police in riot gear. The strategy backfires, according to Mr. Black, because the police in their armor with their dogs, firehoses, and tear gas, only fortify the protesters' resolve – "It *made* them." People who want *human rights* are probably undeterred by inhumane tactics because *they want human rights*.

The institutional decision to respond to peaceful protesters with excessive aggression only "reinforced that what they were doing was good." This is a powerful observation. I try to imagine Mr. Black as a child peering out at the world from his TV set as he sees people who look like him being brutalized by police – the very people who are tasked with maintaining order, protecting citizens, and preserving what ought to be freedom. I value Mr. Black's willingness to share these intimate details about his life. Learning from others' experiences, sharing our own, and taking the time to actively reflect on how all of our lives fit together, not only humanizes us but is also the wellspring of our greatest hopes for the future. Next, Mr. Black

shares a story about his 51st birthday that he spends in downtown Chicago – which is the same day that Donald Trump becomes the President-elect (November 9, 2016).

> I got a cigar and I went outside, and I was walking, and it was just a *mass crowd everywhere*. And there's something about – you know the old mob mentality? It triggers something in people, and before I knew it, I was sucked in it, and I was in the middle of Michigan Avenue. By nature, I'm a journalist, so that's what drew me in, and then, the *mob mentality* is what triggered me to, to, you know, "Fuck Trump!" [. . .]
>
> I wish there was a way you could have pushed a button and everybody who didn't vote that was marching that night, glowed in the dark, so I could go up to them and be like, "You need to go home, because you're a part of the problem, you're not fixing it, you made him – you put him in that office – you know that, right?" That's what people don't understand – when you don't vote, and they get in the office, you actually helped them get into the office. So, I felt *great* that night – that I was a part of history, that I practiced what I preached, and that I wasn't afraid when cameras was walking past us – I wasn't hiding my face – nobody asked me for comments or anything, but I was just happy with myself. I was at peace. (*Mr. Black* 10:22; 31:29)

Mr. Black #13: *The Old Mob Mentality*

Mr. Black tells me that he books a hotel room in downtown Chicago for his birthday with the expectation that he will be celebrating Hillary Clinton's victory with the people of his hometown. Instead, on the morning of his birthday he awakes to the surprise that Donald Trump has won the presidency. Nevertheless, Mr. Black "got a cigar and went outside" to check out the unfolding scene. It seems that Mr. Black intends to keep some measure of distance from the escalating "*mass crowd*," but suddenly, "the old mob mentality" "triggers" something in him.

Interestingly, he offers a second explanation for his involvement that is somewhat at odds with the first: “By nature, I’m a journalist, so that’s what drew me in.” The mob mentality “sucked him in” while his “natural” journalistic inclinations “drew him in.” This agentic bifurcation confounds an understanding of just “who” is driving this car (body). Then Mr. Black reorders his account in saying that, initially, he is driven by a desire merely to observe. Once he gets there, however, the crowd’s “mob mentality” quickly overtakes him as he begins enthusiastically participating in the march, injecting his voice into air as it fills with anti-Trump chanting.

Mr. Black offers a wonderfully illustrative account of how the myth of a “mob mentality” continues to endure. First, let’s recall Le Bon’s *invention* of the concept of a mob mentality within his contagion theory from Chapter 1. Le Bon projected and forecast an alarmingly homogenized danger onto (1880s) French crowds in a strategic political effort to discredit these gatherings. I question if anyone has ever been a part of or witnessed this phenomenon of a bunch of people recklessly tearing through the streets *together* for no apparent reason? What would bond such a collective together? Perhaps angry sports mobs may resemble a similar fracas, but at least these fans have losing or winning a sporting match to blame for such puzzling behavior. Le Bon claims, with unsubstantiated support, that mob mentalities occur because all of the members are “unconscious.” To my knowledge – which, ironically, I cannot have – it is difficult to maneuver one’s body while unconscious, which would only be compounded by the presence of other insentient people angrily bobbing about. Meanwhile, the mob mentality described by Le Bon states that, despite the fact that no one in a mob has a functioning brain, the members are nonetheless dead set on destruction and chaos without cause or purpose.

Instead, I suggest that “mobs” form when people feel that their or others’ values and/or freedom is threatened, and each participant consciously and conscientiously chooses to join up

with others who feel similarly. Mr. Black mentions that he is a journalist by nature; I offer that we are all potentially journalists by nature. What do journalists do? Many tend to observe, record, reflect, engage, question, research, and sometimes participate in the social phenomena they cover. I think Mr. Black is saying that he is *curious* by nature, cares for the people and future of Chicago by nature, and also harbors a strong dislike for Donald Trump – probably not by nature, but instead as something he has learned over time. In other words, Le Bon's conception of mob mentality fails to account for the manifold personal reasons for why people participate in collective protest. Intriguingly, describing the experience of being part of a protest collective spans multiple potential perspectives, drawing together distinct lifeworlds across disparate relational, moral, and political contexts.

Mr. Black #14: *Practice What You Preach*

Mr. Black informs me that he has voted in every election since he turned 18. K mentions this same thing (K.7 "civic duty/group power"). Voting and the freedom to assemble in public are sacred to him and became even more salient during his service abroad in countries where public dissenters routinely "disappear" (Mr. Black.11 "have to hide"). Mr. Black wishes there "was a way [he] could have pushed a button and everybody who didn't vote that was marching that night [in Chicago] glowed in the dark." This sentiment reminds me of both my and K's roiling anger and suspicion about the other people in our midst – the members of our communities (K.6 "hear my anger"). This imaginary "button" idea continues Mr. Black's modal threads relating to showing, hiding, and making/being made. He is angry that Trump will become president – "On MY birthday of all days!?" – and desires a button he could push to help him locate the dissenters who betrayed him, by making their bodies "glow in the dark" to show him who they really are. Mr. Black contends that all of the people who did not vote "made him"

[President Trump] and "put him in that office." Earlier in the quotation from which I identified mode #12, Mr. Black describes how police brutality "made" Civil Rights protesters ("didn't fear violence"). Here, Mr. Black holds any fellow marchers who did not vote responsible for "making" President Donald Trump. "Making" appears to signify collaboration, time, and intention.

Being "made" and "unmade" are processes. Mr. Black is an active participant in his community, dedicating much of his free time to help cultivate and sustain a public garden. He also mentors first-generation college students of color, spends time with his daughter and partner, and facilitates community conversations about racial inequality. Everything *takes* time, and the unending passage of time is one of the only things that no one can control. It seems Mr. Black understands how precious and finite time is so he makes the most of his presence by following a personal mantra of "practicing what he preaches." In other words, for Mr. Black, each moment presents itself as an opportunity to participate in shaping and reshaping our relational lifeworlds for the better.

I especially like this idiom for the protest experience. "Practicing what one preaches" is fairly self-evident on the surface: do what you say you are going to do/do as you tell others they ought to do. More than just moralizing, this phrase seeks a standard for people's identity performances that encourages a lived consistency across the intentionality of speech and the execution of behavior. This effort to align our character in and of itself is a practice. Preaching is also a practice. What seems most relevant to the present study is the inherent relationality this phrase indicates. It represents the mutual accountability we each practice with others as the existential lifeworld we all inhabit fills with meanings that we ourselves express through our bodies and voices. People who do not practice what they preach may seem markedly unfamiliar

and/or unintelligible due to some lack of consistency between their talk and actions. For example, if I tell Sarah that she needs to start recycling because the earth is dying (preach), but I myself do not recycle (practice), I am not following through (practicing) with what I prescribe for Sarah to do (preach). In addition to being dialogic and relational, practicing what one preaches is also an ethical imperative. Making an effort to practice what we preach feels essential to the project of protest. Protest spans both a practice that is preached, and a preaching (ethical discourse) that is practiced (embodied/performed). Mr. Black "practiced what he preached" and "felt *great* that night – that I was a part of history." He sustains his own history of following through with what he says he is going to do. Next, Mr. Black shares the final story of this chapter, about marching with his godson:

> So, my . . . when my gay son is walkin' out there with his tightass pants on, I'm right next to him with my hands around him, making sure people know that that's my godson. Even if . . . I'll show you a picture when I'm done. I went to an event that was for him – and I knew it was for the LGBT community and I purposely wore my uniform [Army]. I *purposely* did it. Because that's unheard of – there's this idea that you're not supposed to do that, but I purposely did that because I wanted the LGBT community to see him and me, and me in my uniform, and how much I love him. It's supportive and I guess in a way, protest. I love him. (*Mr. Black* 50:10)

Mr. Black #15: *I Did It on Purpose – I Wanted Them to See Us Together*

Near the close of our interview, Mr. Black's face lights up as he tells me about his godson. Mr. Black's relationship with his godson began as a mentorship but evolves over time into a loving father-son bond. He explains that he attends every single PRIDE or LGBT event he can, sometimes with his godson and sometimes alone for his godson. Mr. Black describes how

he wraps his arms around the young man as they march together so everyone knows "that's my godson." He shows me a wonderful picture of the two of them embracing and beaming with happiness in the foreground of a vibrant PRIDE march, with Mr. Black deliberately donning camouflage that definitely stands out more than it blends in.

There are two key aspects of this story that I will unpack before moving forward – the United States military rules regarding uniforms and the bizarre history of LGBT service members in the United States military. Mr. Black is an Army veteran. This is central to his story because there are strict guidelines for when and where veterans are permitted to wear their uniforms, and even further restrictions regarding which type of uniform they may wear. I looked up the rules concerning veteran military garb and they are specific, detailed, and mostly restrictive.[28] In other words, if you are a veteran and you just feel like wearing your old gear out in the world, you should probably think again. I found a court case in which one decorated Army veteran was indicted for "The unauthorized wearing of a U.S. military uniform or of military badges, decorations and medals (misdemeanors): 6 months in prison and $5,000 fines" (Singer). The man was also charged with fraud and "eight counts of unauthorized wearing of U.S. military badges, decorations, or medals" (Singer). Eight counts of "unauthorized wearing" of military medals also suggests that the man earned at least eight medals during his service. Regardless, the United States military takes these rules very seriously.

Now, a brief history lesson about the shameful way the United States military has consistently treated LGBT service members. There is a convoluted and twisted history of military policies that routinely break civil law in order to exclude[29] LGBT-identifying persons

[28] For more information about the US military's uniform rules for veterans, see Smith.

[29] For more on the convoluted complexities of military rules and laws, see Rawlins.

from service. Four primary policy moves comprehend this history. (1) In 1982 the Department of Defense (DoD) implements a policy stating that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service" (Dworak-Peck). While this vague and wicked policy is in effect, thousands of members are dishonorably discharged if their sexual preference is discovered but *only* if they are gay or lesbian. (2) In 1988 the DoD changes its mind, based on a report from 1957 that found lesbian and gay servicemembers do not pose any significant risk to other members of the military (Dworak-Peck). (By the way, this policy change does *nothing* to compensate the thousands of soldiers dishonorably discharged during the ban.) (3) In 1993 President Bill Clinton signs the infamous "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, barring any discussion about sexuality in the military unless it is sexist or concerns heterosexuality. (4) Finally, in 2011, after nearly 20 years of no one asking or telling anyone anything about their romantic lives, the Obama Administration repeals this cruel policy (Dworak-Peck). So, now, let's return to Mr. Black's story with these regulatory uniform and discriminatory LGBT insights in mind.

Mr. Black emphasizes three times that he "*purposely*" wears his Army uniform to PRIDE and LGBT affiliated marches. He says wearing his uniform to these events is "unheard of – there's this idea that you're not supposed to do that." I had not realized this until after our interview, but Mr. Black totally understates the level of risk he invites when he wears his uniform to a *political* event. The United States military purports to be an unpolitical organization. Seriously. Mr. Black knows what is at stake for him in terms of his retirement benefits and freedom, but he is not focused on that – while at the event or even now in reflection. It makes much more sense to me now why he wants to *show* me the picture of him and his godson to "prove" that he did it. I already believe him, of course, *but now I understand*. By the way, he displays the photo prominently in his office. Mr. Black's decision to adorn himself in

this “unheard of” fashion appears to amplify his ethical voice without even speaking one word.

One of my favorite quotations in this project is, “I wanted the LGBT community to see him and me, and me in my uniform, and how much I love him. It’s supportive and I guess in a way, protest. I love him.” Mr. Black embodies several intertwining layers of relational visuality. He wants the LGBTQ+ community to see him and know that there *are* military service members that love and support them. He wants his godson to see him and be with him, “wearing his tightass pants,” as they walk together. He probably does *not* want the Army to see him, but he still chooses to put himself on display. This action brings to mind the young man who disappears in K’s story (K.8 “death for him”). These are selfless acts – with *very* different outcomes, but nonetheless the two men do what they do “on purpose.” These acts of humanity radiate grace and light into a world that sometimes seems all too comfortable with darkness.

After 20+ years of military service, Mr. Black risks his own retirement and possibly even jail time by openly committing military crimes “*on purpose*.” He is not asking this time; he is telling (Ron.5 “aerial dot”; K.6 “hear my anger”; Mr. Black.11 “have to hide”). He is probably correct that few PRIDE marches (absent his presence) feature veterans in their uniforms. In fact, no nonmilitary marches do (or “should”). Mr. Black remains unconcerned about potential repercussions and, surprisingly, he is not even sure that what he is doing amounts to protest – he “guesses” it is, a little bit. (From my perspective, it absolutely is.) Clearly, the most important things to him, from his words, are his godson; the LGBTQ+ community; other people who vote and take action; and, seemingly in last place, the military. Mr. Black is protesting with his godson at his side, embodying this transcendent symbolism of inclusion, vibrancy, compassionate subversion, and risk in intermingled visual trajectories. But it seems that there is really only one thing on his mind: “I want him to see how much I love him.” This story captures

Mr. Black in action, doing what he does best – practicing what he preaches (Mr. Black.14).

Theme III, Existential Horizons, adds more depth and dimensions to the experience of collective protest. Theme I, Existential Activation, considers some of the cultural-personal forces compelling a person to go out and protest. Theme II, Existential Magnification, describes the important roles that voice, visibility, and collectivity play in affecting this experience of being with others. Theme III continues this exploration through the embodied dynamics and political permissibility of showing, hiding, and making. Mode #11 contrasts the freedom one has to express divergent or even dangerous views with the necessity of staying hidden (safe) through Mr. Black's accounts of being posted overseas ("have to hide"). Mode #12 revisits the Civil Rights Movement, focusing on the failure of police brutality to control or even impede protesters; it empowered them ("didn't fear violence"). Mode #13 examines the "mob mentality" and attempts to reframe some of the assumptions supporting this myth. Rather than "mobs," crowds of protesters usually come together because they want to; each person decides to do so and has a reason. When it feels like collective values or freedom are at stake, protesters hit the streets. When we worry about our present and future, we desire to find other people with whom to take action, establishing an alternative presence. Mode #14 focuses on discourse, embodiment, and ethical praxis in protest through the idiom, "practice what you preach." Finally, mode #15 shares the great personal risk Mr. Black is willing to take in order to practice what he preaches ("see us on purpose").

Chapter 3 has considered three existential themes involved in realizing the experience of participating in collective protest. Theme I: Existential Crises and Activation, features Ron's experiential phenomenological modes that illustrate the tendency of protests to emerge during times of great cultural strain. During periods of such heightened social discord, many people

experience a sense of estrangement from prevailing social values, or relatedly, feel powerless to face such daunting complexities alone. Theme II: Existential Magnification, reveals how protesters, like K, often join collectives to experience and participate in demonstrations of existential solidarity. Consequently, like-minded people draw together to express their personal grievances, bonding as one and actualizing a protest gestalt. The existential "bifurcation" of this effort speaks to the ground-level standpoint experience of a participant who *is there* yet at the same time is unable to fully grasp the enormous potential this formation symbolizes. Theme III: Existential Horizons, considers temporal, historical, social, and cultural contingencies functioning as stimulants or dampers to this delegation of freedom – both to assemble in public and to feel that one's voice is *being* "heard." Often the inspiring choice to take action and join a protest group gratifies a desire to be with others who share one's ethics. Such action fulfills a need to participate in the collective visual and vocal empowerment of expressing political grievances and the importance of exercising and preserving this civic freedom to voice dissent in public demonstrations of outrage and solidarity.

Chapter 4 continues this existential phenomenological exploration of the experience of collective protest. I present two additional existential themes concerning danger and responsibility, and community and imagined futures. Chapter 3 has featured some of the more enjoyable aspects of the protest experience. In contrast, Chapter 4 considers the potential danger protesters face, the mystical emergence of protest communities, and some of the inspiring sacrifices activists freely make to give their full support to the causes and people they love.

CHAPTER 4

AN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF PARTICIPATING IN COLLECTIVE PROTEST: RISK, SPACE, AND RELATIONAL REVOLUTIONS

Collective protest involves crowds, space, and time. Being a member of a crowd of people often heightens the awareness we have of our self and the others in our midst. Throughout our lives we continuously encounter unfamiliar people as we go about the business of building a life and developing routines to make our daily lives more predictable and comfortable. Across professional, social, and familial contexts, we perform adaptive identities while maintaining appropriate spatial bubbles around our self and others. Almost unconsciously, we become culturally adept at sustaining an arm's-length distance from neighboring bodies. Why are we so attentive to space? In a crowd we are usually mindful of others' personal space and do not want to appear as threatening. In spaces shared with others, our existential and phenomenological existence as a being-in-the-world reminds us of our "live" existence; *we are here right now*. We take in the sights, smells, sounds, and sensations of experiencing the fullness of being physically present and vulnerable. Space is a relational experience that reflects cultural histories and power struggles. Our positioning in space communicates meanings. This chapter considers understandings of the collective protest space as risky, rewarding, revolutionary, and potentially transcendent.

Chapter 3 considered three existential phenomenology themes involved in the experience of participating in collective protest. These themes – activation and protest involvement, embodiment and collective magnification, and cultural contingencies of freedom – emerged as key experiential components pertaining to initiating and realizing one's participation in collective protest. Chapter 4 explores two additional existential themes informing this

experience. Theme IV: Existential Stakes explores the aspects of risk, responsibility, and community in collective protest. Theme V: Existential Time-Space describes transformative spatial qualities of collective protest and how they carry the potential to refashion people's conventional spatiotemporal understandings of boundaries, belonging, and power. While Chapter 3 explored beginning the existential journey of becoming a protester, Chapter 4 focuses on the agency of working together with like-minded others to create egalitarian futures (Ron.4 "like-minded"; K.9 "one large body"). Participants Catherine and Mikhail each share four narratives that reveal thematic variations (modes) of protesting in space. Their stories illustrate how protesting is always risky, even as it symbolizes the existence of collectives driven together by hope. Thus, this chapter considers several existential features of collective protest that exemplify the capacity of this experience to transcend cultural and social alienation and build communitarian spaces of inclusion.

The first section of this chapter, theme IV: Existential Stakes, describes existential variations of collective protest pertaining to childhood activism, lifelong engagement, the potential for danger, and community inclusion.

Theme IV: Existential Stakes: Risk and Responsibility (Catherine)

The first narrative of theme IV features Catherine's reflections on how protesting as a child with her mother shaped her values and identity as an adult.

> It's kind of incredible because you *get there* – and the first time I went I was young, and I was going on this campout with my mom, and I was just *dreading it*. I told her "I *really* don't fucking want to do this, Mom! This is just gonna be us and a bunch of hippies!" [. . .]

> There were people there [Heartwood[30]] from Colorado; there were people there from Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Kentucky – just *all over the place*! And all of them talking about the same problems and the same issues and how it was *so hard* to make people listen and to realize that *this* is a *real thing*! I think that what really got me to stay with Heartwood was just that feeling of, of togetherness – that everybody, we were all very different people – but we were all incredibly joined by this *visceral need to protect our homes*. [. . .]
>
> I think it's very important for children to be brought up with a sense of social responsibility. You have a responsibility to your planet, your community, your environment – all of it. It sustains you; you need to sustain it. And I think that, if I hadn't been brought up that way growing up in Southern Illinois, without the other influences around, I might be a very different person. I was brought up with that sense of environmental and social responsibility – without those words ever being used. (*Catherine* 6:51; 8:07; 31:55)

Catherine #16: *I Dreaded It as a Kid, but the Togetherness Made Me Stay*

Catherine describes her initial apprehension when her mother brings her along to an environmentalist gathering. She says she was "*dreading it*" because of her perception that Heartwood was "just gonna be us and a bunch of old hippies." These expectations seem fairly typical for a child about to experience a new environment. Children remind adults that the world is full of experiences, and when things are new to us, we often feel apprehensive. Yet some children, like Catherine, possess curiosity that primes them to be more "open" to new

[30] Founded in 1991, Heartwood is a regional network that protects forests and supports community activism in the eastern United States through education, advocacy, and citizen empowerment; their mission statement is: "*We are people helping people protect the places they love*"; see "Heartwood" for more.

encounters. Uniquely, Catherine is the only interviewee who "always remembers" being an activist before she even knew what the word meant. Catherine reflects how "it's kind of incredible" "once you *get there*." Several other participants discuss how much of their pre-protest apprehension dissipates "once you get there" with like-minded others (Ron.4 "like-minded"; K.6 "hear my anger"; Mr. Black.13 "mob mentality").

In our interview, Catherine details the ostracism she feels during high school as many of her more conservative rural peers reject her for being "that *weird liberal chick*." While at Heartwood with her mom, Catherine seems to transcend that social alienation, "I was always that *weird liberal chick*, and all of a sudden there was this group of people who were also that weird liberal chick. It was one of the first places . . . just . . . just to *feel* that I was not alone, and that other people cared – not just about me – but I mean about the things that I care about so much! And I guess in there, me too." This uplifting connectivity corresponds with Ron's and K's reflections on the importance of being with others who are also worried (theme I: Crisis and Activation; theme II: Magnification). Catherine shares how communal spaces like Heartwood affirm that there are like-minded people with shared concerns, who *care* about her existence and join her in the righteous communal quest for ethical environmental action (Ron.4 "like-minded"). Catherine is not lonely when she is with fellow activists.

Mode #16 exhibits the potential of protest to transform people's customary relational suppositions concerning place, space, and face. Catherine's childhood unease about gathering with "a bunch of old hippies" fades away as she feels a compassionate bond with others who care about her lifeworld; the sanctity of the environment; and she guesses, "in there, *me too*." Consider how attuned environmentalists often are to a humane ethics of space. Environmentalism highlights the fragility of the environment, *the place* in which humanity exists

generation after generation. Environmentalism prioritizes people's (and other creatures') access to sustainable lives and healthy environments over the interests of capitalist commerce. Catherine demonstrates her affinity for the pleasurable company of other like-minded people at Heartwood campouts ("old hippies") to whom she feels connected. This intergenerational group membership seems to reflect Catherine's own identity of being "that *weird*" environmentalist "*chick*" (Ron.4 "like-minded"). Collective protest highlights the ways that like-minded people can be the foundational building blocks of inspired communities.

The next thematic mode considers Catherine's reflection on the importance of raising children to be/come self-aware citizens of democracy.

Catherine #17: *Children Should be Raised with a Sense of Social Responsibility*

Catherine feels that parents should teach their children how to become responsible self-aware people. Perhaps Catherine draws on her own enriching experiences of early activism with her mother. She describes social responsibility as entailing "a responsibility to your planet, your community, your environment – all of it. It sustains you; you need to sustain it." Her description begins with a responsibility to the ultimate spatial surround, our entire planet. From her vantage point, "my" responsibility to "my environment" extends to "my community," resonating across humanity and the entire "planet." Catherine explains how her youthful exposure to activism helps her feel connected, purposeful, cared for, and not alone (Catherine.16 "kid/togetherness").

Heartwood's affirming atmosphere inspires Catherine's lifelong commitment to safeguarding secure living conditions for all people. Even as her school peers stereotype her for her "liberal" views, Catherine connects with other people similarly dedicated to the environmental issues dear to her heart. She seems to realize she is *not weird* once she connects with people in the Heartwood community. Catherine is passionate about her view that children

should be raised around activist circles so they can learn to appreciate that there are good people out there fighting for justice. Just knowing that groups like Heartwood exist may motivate someone to take their first steps toward shedding the "isolating" tensions we all face as youths in school, as adults at work, and as people in the world together. I believe that we all seek supportive communities.

Standing with her mom and fellow Heartwood members, Catherine's early activism overcomes her adolescent loneliness. As she reflects on this time, Catherine observes that "without the other influences around, I might be a very different person. I was brought up with that sense of environmental and social responsibility – without those words ever being used." Catherine embodies the unfolding potential of youthful activism. Her Heartwood experiences centralize the importance of practicing social accountability and finding and preserving one's community. Even "without those words ever being used," Catherine discovers herself through the ethical mirroring she experiences alongside other Heartwood members. She is developing her activist practices before even knowing the words for these doings. She is already practicing her involvement as she hones her emergent "preach" (Mr. Black.14 "practice/preach"). Participating in this protest community opens up Catherine's world as she leaves behind the "weird" "loneliness" in high school to emerge as a responsible and empowered contributing member of Heartwood (Ron.4 "like-minded"; K.9 "one large body"). In other words, Catherine's identity felt stolen and subjugated by high school bullies' name-calling until she sees herself through the sympathetic faces of other Heartwood members. For Catherine, there is nothing "weird" about this ethical solidarity in which she cultivates herself to practice what she preaches each and every step of her life (Mr. Black.14 "practice/preach").

Modes #16 and #17 consider Catherine's descriptions of "social responsibility" as

encompassing overlapping contexts. As one's "personal" lifeworld coincides with others' lifeworlds, the inescapable interconnectedness of our collective planetary existence becomes apparent. Catherine believes that building a better world begins at home as people realize most of their ultimate concerns are shared and revolve around the desire to live meaningful lives and the "*visceral need to protect* [*all of*] *our homes*."

The next narrative concerns the #NoDAPL (No Dakota Access Pipeline) movement at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. Before engaging with the following modes, I will provide some background information about this movement in order to contextualize Catherine's experience. "#NoDAPL" (No Dakota Access Pipeline) is the hashtag for the protest movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline Company's plan to build a 1,134-mile-long underground oil pipeline (Nauman). After numerous initial routes were proposed and rejected, a pipeline route that would include a substantial track of piping cutting beneath the sovereign territory of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, was accepted. This route would potentially compromise the Standing Rock Sioux's water supply and disrupt Native burial grounds (Nauman). The Standing Rock Sioux tribe lost their court case in a United States court room that actually lacks legal justification to make a ruling against the Sioux's sovereign jurisdiction (Nauman). In early 2016 the United States government ruled in favor of the Dakota Pipeline Company (DPC),[31] "granting the oil companies permission to condemn private land for the pipeline when property owners refuse to lease it" (Nauman). In other words, the United States government effectively allowed the DPC to ravage the sacred lands of the Standing Rock Sioux people.

Following this rogue ruling, thousands of protesters converged on site at Standing Rock,

[31] For more information see "DAPL Facts" from the Dakota Pipeline Company's website.

North Dakota, including members from nearly one hundred tribes across the United States and Canada, as well as droves of concerned citizens from all over the United States (Nauman). Protesting began in early spring 2016 when hundreds and then thousands of demonstrators began setting up camps at the site. The showdown at Standing Rock continued for nearly eight months until "armed soldiers and police in riot gear removed the demonstrators" and arrested over 100 people on October 27, 2016 (Silva). DAPL officially "opened" the completed pipeline, stretching 1,172-miles, on June 2, 2017, and currently transfers around 500,000 barrels of oil a day (McCown). While the efforts to defend the Standing Rock Sioux's tribal lands ultimately failed, many consider the #NoDAPL movement an inspiring example of the power people wield when they join forces across diverse ethnic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds to fight together for a common cause (in this case, for Sioux lands). Further, DAPL was forced to reroute the pipeline around Sioux lands although the current route is not far enough away for many concerned tribespeople (McCown).[32] The next mode considers the generosity of strangers.

Catherine #18: *The People with Warm Feet Had No Idea Who She Was*

Catherine tells me how Heartwood, the environmental organization to which she belongs, "started collecting arctic gear, to send to them, you know? Boots and gloves and sleeping bags that were rated for negative 30 [degrees Fahrenheit] – because the winds on the prairie get *cold*, dude. *It's freeeezing cold*." Heartwood members anticipate that #NoDAPL protesters will maintain their camps as summer gives way to fall, and a North Dakotan fall, as Catherine explains, is "*freeeezing cold*." She also describes a woman's boundless generosity:

> This was Heartwood! It was everybody donating [to #NoDAPL protesters]. People bought shit and sent it in; people gave shit and sent it in; people made shit and sent it in.

[32] In November 2017 the $5.2 billion Keystone XL Pipeline sprung its first publicly acknowledged leak; the company reported a second massive leak in November 2019; see Winsor for more on these leaks.

> We had this one woman who knitted like 500 pairs of socks out of Merino Wool yarn – which had to cost her an *incredible* amount of money. And she knitted them *by hand*! We knew who she was but the people with warm feet had no idea who she was. It was awesome! She's like, "Give it to them! They need it, give it to them!" That woman . . . the woman was like 70-something . . . Girl, you couldn't knit enough socks for everyone in that village! You knitted 500, Jesus! If you would have bought enough yarn to do that, you would have had to sell your house! (*Catherine* 55:45)

In a selfless, labor-intensive, and quite expensive gesture, a "70-something" woman knits over 500 pairs of Merino Wool[33] socks for the #NoDAPL protesters. Catherine remembers the old woman insisting that Heartwood deliver the socks to the Standing Rock protectors – "Give it to them! They need it, give it to them!" Catherine notes that Merino Wool is quite expensive, and even after knitting 500 pairs of socks by hand, the old woman still wishes she can do more to help the cause. In an inspiring gesture of goodwill, the woman requests that she remain anonymous because what is most important to her is that #NoDAPL protesters have "warm feet" – "They need it, give it to them!"

It is so moving to picture this woman in her 70s knitting sock after sock for strangers as she protests at home with her hands. Perhaps, at times, her aging fingers become stiff and ache from this embodied labor of devotion. It is possible that she transfers more than just physical warmth to the protesters as her parcels make their way onto their feet and into their hearts. Woven with grace, purpose, and pragmatism, the socks journey from her fingertips to the

[33] Merino Wool originates from Spanish Merino sheep – although many of these sheep are now raised in Australia – and is celebrated for its superior qualities of having a "good weight to warmth ratio [and is] cooler than many other materials"; it also lends itself to less "piling" (when wool separates/attracts lint) and is considered to be the most soft, warm, durable, (and expensive) wool; see Moulding.

"people with warm feet" out on the frozen prairie who have "no idea who she was." There is something tender and soulful about this woman hand-making such caring secret gifts; perhaps it is not important for the protesters to know her name. After all, she probably does not know their names either, and it does not make any difference. It may be that this saintly woman is a bit too old to be out in the cold at Standing Rock, but she *is there* – warming protesters' feet with her love, lifting their spirits with her philanthropic humanity, and playing her part in something bigger and more valuable than the cost of enough Merino Wool to make 500 socks[34] (Ron.2 "obligation"; Ron.3 "underground org."; K.9 "one large body"; K.10 "five stories up!").

Next, Catherine details how alarming it is when she and her fellow protesters come face-to-face with government-sanctioned military force:

> You can't give in to that rage. I mean, sometimes you *have to* – don't get me wrong. At the point where – at the #NoDAPL shit – when they started bringing out firehoses and tear gas – *now* it's time to get *enraged*! Because you weren't doing shit but sitting there on a horse sayin' "Don't come on my land. Don't fuck up my land." You were peacefully saying "Don't. Come. On. My. Land. Do not endanger my life; do not endanger my family's life; don't fuck up my water supply; get off my land!" And they came at you with military force – THEY DROVE TANKS UP to threaten them! It was absolute *insanity*! (*Catherine*: 46:29)

Catherine #19: *You Can't Give in to that Rage Until It's Time to Get* Enraged!

Catherine describes her presence at the #NoDAPL protest site as the desperate situation

[34] I estimate that this woman spent between $2,800 and $3,400 on the Merino Wool for these socks. This is based on the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Wool and Mohair market price from Tuesday March 19, 2019, at which time Merino Wool was $6.02 per pound. Wool is sold in bales weighing around 243 pounds and a good pair of Merino socks weigh about one pound ($6.02 x 243 lbs. x 2). The price has gone down in recent years, so I adjusted for inflation; see "USDA Announcement" for more about these specifics.

drastically worsens "when they start bringing out firehoses and tears gas" and "TANKS" to intimidate the demonstrators. She explains the importance of maintaining the peace during protest and how protesters must resist the urge "to give in to that rage." That is, she advocates for this stance until authorities or violent counterprotesters push activists to the point of no return and "you *have to*." Several interviewees appreciate the efficacy of nonviolent protests for their capacity to impact broader cultural sentiments and capture the sympathy of other citizens watching violence unfold in media coverage. Relatedly, in the last chapter Mr. Black remarks that police brutality against Civil Rights protesters "*made* them" [the protesters] even more determined to continue their fight for equality (Mr. Black.12 "didn't fear violence"). Catherine explains that she and other #NoDAPL protesters are peaceful until the police and DAPL security guards "started bringing out firehoses and tear gas [and TANKS] – *now* it's time to get *enraged*!"

It makes sense that peaceful protesters would become "enraged" when their nonviolent demonstrations come under physical attack. As mentioned previously, K and Ron are driven to protest by a "need" to express their "anger" when "*despicable*" things occur that they feel powerless to address by themselves (Ron.1 "crisis"; Ron.2 "obligation"; K.6 "hear my anger"). Such catalyzing events spark a progressive ratcheting-up of participants' emotions and actions. "Anger" is a qualitatively different emotional state than "rage." Anger is considered to be a "controlled/able" emotional state whereas rage indicates a "loss of control."[35] In other words, anger is an emotional disposition arising from a strong sense of displeasure while rage sparks in unpredictable "fits." Rage occurs when "some" force unexpectedly disrupts the peaceful flow of respectful albeit oppositional decorum, often triggering clashes of disorder and frenzied

[35] See "Rage," *Merriam-Webster*.

responses.

Catherine instantly knows it is time to get *enraged* at #NoDAPL when "they came at you with military force – THEY DROVE TANKS UP to threaten them! It was absolute *insanity*!" Catherine explains that she has "zero respect" for violent responses to peaceful demonstrations. Rage and anger both evolve from a sense of fear, but with rage this transition typically occurs so quickly that the milliseconds of fear priming this rage flash by unnoticed (Seltzer). Catherine knows that unprovoked violence "*enraged*" her and activated her to become even more involved in sustaining the #NoDAPL efforts.

In the next story Catherine describes the terror she feels as she sneaks around the police barricades to bring #NoDAPL protesters much-needed supplies:

> So, um, there's no wood, and they're in the prairie in the middle of winter [Standing Rock]. The cops had this place at a distance, off the reservation, pretty much surrounded – you couldn't get in. And myself along with several other people from Heartwood, from around Indiana, Illinois – took truckloads of wood up there and *had to sneak in*, and like go through weird little dirt roads that weren't around these police barricades that like . . . with the headlights off in the middle of the prairie in the middle of the night – tryin' to get wood to these people so that they could fucking eat and stay warm [. . .].
>
> I felt like a secret agent – it was really exciting, but it was also terrifying! And a lot of people were doing that, you know? We were not by any means the only people doing that! We couldn't possibly be the only people doing that! They would be *dying* out there! [. . .]
>
> I was *not* unlikely to take that risk, ever. It was *not* something that scared me. What scared me was being *in* the situation. I wasn't scared of doing it. I *was* scared at the time

because holy shit, if they catch us, it's really going to fucking suck! And especially because I've got like six people in the truck with me – and two of em' said, "If cops come at us, I'm *shootin*' em." And I'm like, "No, no, no! We are not going that far!" (*Catherine* 53:55; 54:11; 56:15)

Catherine #20: *People Would Have* Died; *I Wasn't Afraid of the Risk, I Was Afraid of the Situation*

Above, Catherine explains how the police surrounded Standing Rock with a barricade of officers, soldiers, DAPL security members, and barbed wire fences to cut off supply routes to the demonstrators. Apparently, those who developed this containment strategy intended to starve or overcome protesters with the cold. As the seasons shift, it is freezing cold and there is no available wood to burn for fuel, warmth, or cooking on the windswept prairie. Catherine says she and some friends from Heartwood "took truckloads of wood up there and *had to sneak in*" at night to evade police detection. She explains the urgent necessity of these missions quite simply: "We were tryin' to get wood to these people so they could fucking eat and stay warm." She remembers the excitement of these trips, feeling "like a secret agent" – "but it was also terrifying!" I admire Catherine's observation that she and her Heartwood crew could not possibly have been the only people taking on such risks because "They would be *dying* out there!" This relates back to the unidentified old woman from mode #18 (Catherine.18 "warm feet"). It seems Catherine and this woman are both able to see the "bigger picture" of generosity toward strangers to save Native Americans' sovereign lands, protect their sacred burial grounds, and preserve their access to clean water. These people fight to protect human rights.

Catherine's decision to put herself at risk to help bring #NoDAPL activists supplies takes an unexpected and horrifying turn as *two* of the six people in the truck with her caution that, "If

cops come at us, I'm *shootin*' em." Catherine seems stunned by her friends' willingness to shoot another person in this already "terrifying" scenario – probably because her mission involves saving lives, not taking them. She appears dedicated to bringing supplies and willing to risk her own freedom if she is caught, but she draws a hard line at the prospect of inflicting harm on anyone in the process. Catherine explains in no uncertain terms why she willingly takes these risks: "I was *not* unlikely to take that risk, ever. It was *not* something that scared me. What scared me was being *in* the situation. I wasn't scared of doing it. I *was* scared at the time because holy shit, if they catch us, it's really going to fucking suck!" Catherine understands the danger she faces as she continues to make multiple overnight trips through the woods in a vehicle laden with supplies and people with guns, headlights off, heading straight for an "illegal" protest occupation growing more hazardous by the day as government and state officials grow weary of waiting-out their ineffective and inhumane containment strategy.[36] Catherine explains she is not afraid or unwilling to risk her life to sustain the #NoDAPL protesters, fearless and freezing on the prairie. Catherine *chooses* to participate in the #NoDAPL protest in this way. It is both ludicrous and terrifying to see police officers build and post a barricade (including barbed wire) around a Native American Indian reservation full of demonstrators refusing to yield the sovereignty of the Standing Rock Sioux territory to non-Native oil profiteers who fully intend to bulldoze into the earthen burial grounds where their indigenous ancestors lay. The pipeline holds no benefit for the Sioux – they make no money on this land lease as the oily riches beneath their

[36] This cruel policing strategy of barricades and attrition brings to mind the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland during WWII. The Nazis herded and trapped Jewish Poles in an impoverished section of the city with no ability to produce food as the Nazis waited for the inhabitants to either starve to death or be shot in escape attempts by the armed guards posted at the perimeters. Mass starvation decimated Warsaw inhabitants beginning in the summer of 1941, and the death toll rapidly escalated to 5,500 by July and August of 1941; see Rose 30, 33.

territory are set to be piped thousands of miles away to the Midwest.[37]

Catherine illustrates some of the riskier behind-the-scenes aspects of protesting. Some protests can last months or even years. The United States government is typically hesitant to intervene with force in most protest events because they do not want to violate protections afforded to United States citizens by the First Amendment of the Constitution. Citizens of the United States have the right to assemble and publicly air their grievances. The Standing Rock Sioux #NoDAPL protest presents a paradox to authorities. Native American sovereign tribal lands are self-governing and exempt from most United States-sanctioned legal rulings – and especially so, concerning *land*. It is common knowledge to most American citizens, or it certainly ought to be, that Native Americans had their homelands stolen from them and were forcefully relocated by the United States government to undesirable and largely barren lands in the North and Southwest. The #NoDAPL protest movement had excellent media and social media coverage; attracted members from over 100 continental United States and Canadian Native Tribes; and at its height turned Standing Rock into the third largest city in the region, with 1,000-3,000 participants at the site on any given day and 10,000 people at its peak (Hult). Next, I present Catherine's final two modes before summarizing the nuances of this fourth theme, Existential Stakes: Risk and Responsibility.

Catherine's next discourse considers how collective protest groups share similar relational dynamics to members of a family.

I'm sure you've had a boyfriend it was hard to dump because you loved his family. And

[37] The Dakota Access Pipeline ended up being built 70 miles from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation – with the pipeline crossing the Missouri River "70 miles from the new water supply inlet for the Standing Rock Sioux"; the pipeline company website is vague about why the Sioux have a "new water supply inlet" location. Much has happened overtime and the company's website no longer opens the following link: www.daplpipelinefacts.com/Misconceptions.html (previously accessed 24 Mar. 2019); "current" information may be found at DAPL's "Addressing Misconceptions."

> if you haven't, most people have. And protesting is a little bit different because if you're really into it, you don't ever want to really leave it. But you might be tempted to sometimes because it can get really discouraging – it can get *heartbreakingly discouraging*. I can't even tell you – I've had *more environmental fuck-ups* in this country that have broken my heart than men. And I've had a lot of men break my heart. And it can be incredibly discouraging, but that *family* that you *form* keeps you *involved* through comradery, hope, guilt – hahahaheh. It's just like any family – they'll do whatever is necessary to keep you in the fold. (*Catherine* 100:52)

Catherine #21: *That Family You Form Keeps You in the Fold through Comradery, Hope, and Guilt*

Catherine begins her description of how protest groups draw you in through an analogy of being in a romantic relationship that is not working out, but the partner "is hard to dump because you love [their] family." It is as if Catherine is asking, "Have you ever been in love?" – perhaps with someone you eventually fell out of love with, but you still love their family. This emotional tension speaks to the common practice of severing contact with ex-partners as well as with their family members when romantic relationships end. Catherine compares this familial love with protest, but "protesting is a little bit different, because, if you're really into it, you don't ever want to really leave it." While Catherine may fall out of love with her romantic partners and move on when this happens, she never falls out of love with the other activists who share her ethical passion and dedication to environmental justice. She also appears to understand that many of her protesting involvements have no end in sight.

Catherine reveals a key component of the protest experience when she says, "you might be tempted to leave sometimes because it can get really discouraging." Protesting can be very

frustrating for many of the same reasons that people enjoy doing it. For one, protests emerge when there is an overwhelming sense of cultural disorder or a crisis of some kind, so people are often frustrated to begin with (Ron.1 "crisis"; K.6 "hear my anger"). Additionally, all movements must start somewhere, usually as "one-time" or "one-day" protest events. It is also difficult to gauge whether or not a protest is "successful," because the free-flowing spontaneity and anonymity of protesters evades comprehensive quantitative metrics of "progress." Further, sometimes protesting makes the ethical issues at stake feel even more palpable or overwhelming, potentially making protest efforts feel ineffective or hopeless. Facing such uphill battles is disheartening and time-consuming. In these long-term battles, many participants may begin to feel that protest is not "solving" the problem (quickly enough).

Protecting the environment is Catherine's passion. She explains that getting people to care about the environment is incredibly challenging because it is at turns mundane, massive, diverse, local, foreign, abstract, and global. Despite these challenging considerations Catherine cannot understand how anyone can ignore or not be concerned with the health of our ecosystems and the future of our planet. Catherine returns to her analogy of protest as the loving family of a former boyfriend that makes it hard for her to leave. Catherine explains how she experiences heartbreak in varying degrees, depending on the source: "I've had *more environmental fuck-ups* in this country that have broken my heart than men. And I've had a lot of men break my heart." This suggests that, while several men may have broken her heart, none of these experiences compare to the devastation she feels when she sees society and lawmakers time and again fail to act on – or oftentimes even *talk about* – issues relating to environmental protection. Perhaps the realization that her fellow citizens do not care enough to support environmental reform is more painful to her than the end of a romantic relationship. Rather than one person "breaking her

heart," the pain of feeling like humanity refuses to care about keeping our planet healthy devastates Catherine on a much deeper level.

Meanwhile, Catherine and her fellow activists continue to their quest to ensure that the Standing Rock community has access to clean water and a safe environment. These comrades are Catherine's "*family* that [she] *forms* [that] keeps [her] *involved* through comradery, hope, guilt . . .." Comradery, hope, and guilt are here all collective interpersonal emotions. Catherine says her loyalty to her protest family transcends her personal relationships, because she has never fallen out of love with the like-minded people who share her ethical vision of protecting the environment for future generations (Ron.4). Despite repeated "environmental fuck-ups in this country," Catherine says fellow activists "keep you in the fold" – "it's just like any other family." "Fold"[38] comes from the Old Saxon word *faled*, which signifies an enclosure for livestock – primarily flocks of sheep. Alternately, "fold" also references the idea of enwrapping, collapsing, or clasping two or more "things" together. Finally, being *in* "the fold"[39] means that one is with a group of people who share similar values and practices. It is interesting to trace the etymology of "fold," noting its origins as an enclosure that kept a flock together, such as a herd. In the Old Saxonian sense, a flock is entrapped by a fold (barrier), while in contemporary use "being in the fold" reflects the free will of participating members as they choose to be with others who express shared values (Ron.4 "like-minded"; K.7 "civic duty/group power").

Mode #21 illustrates some potentially vexing features of participating in long-term protest efforts, such as Catherine details in her experiences with Heartwood and the #NoDAPL protest. Catherine expresses her understanding that protest movements are lifelong efforts. She

[38] See "Fold," *Merriam-Webster*.

[39] See "The fold," *Merriam-Webster*.

describes how protests must continuously patrol and readdress the United States government's numerous "fuck-ups" – and this fight will likely never be over or won. Catherine and her protest family dedicate much of their time and energy as watchdogs with their eyes squarely fixed on the money game of government corporate oversight and environmental policies. When United States law and the politicians responsible for implementing policy prioritize capitalist industry over citizens' safety and wellbeing, Catherine and her family fold stand ready to safeguard the vulnerable lives of affected peoples.

In the final story of theme IV: Existential Stakes, Catherine reflects on the righteous ethos of protesting:

> It's the same kind of mob mentality, it's just on the other side. If they care, then they *have* to care, and now they have to *do* something about it [. . .].
>
> I think that the most misunderstood thing about protest is that, nine times out of ten, those protesters are *protesting for you*. They're not trying to take your jobs; they're not trying to get in the way of anything – they're *not* crazy. They're protecting *your* rights and *your* environment and *your* government and *your* constitution – they're *protecting you*. If your reaction is to degrade or berate or make fun of those people – or even *worse*, arrest them or do violence to them – and those people keep fighting for *you*, well you know, that's a modern-day saint to me. (*Catherine* 47:56; 50:04)

Catherine #22: *The Other Side of that Mob Mentality*: *Modern-Day Saints*

Catherine describes "the other side" of "mob mentality" as a compulsion to care for others and take action. She details that, once someone realizes their love for humanity, "they *have* to care, and now they have to *do* something about it." In other words, from Catherine's perspective, there is no return to complacency once a person recognizes that others need their

help to survive. Catherine "thinks the most misunderstood thing about protest" is that "those protesters are *protesting for you*." She lists off some commonly held misconceptions of protesters – that they are lazy, unemployed, and/or want to steal others' jobs; that they are anarchists hellbent on destruction for the very sake of chaos; and that they are "crazy." Catherine views protesters very differently when they continue to demonstrate and protect the environment despite this ever-present backlash and potential violent repercussions from others who do not or cannot understand that these activists demonstrate out of "care" and genuine concerns for others' lives – and always will.

Catherine considers protesters who fight to protect strangers' livelihoods – even as they are berated for doing so – to be modern-day saints. Sainthood is an ancient practice of the Roman Catholic church that posthumously rewards exceptionally virtuous persons, who often died as martyrs (a self-sacrifice in the name of one's scruples), by declaring them saints (Gray). Modern-day sainthood follows a different "process": "While early saints were martyrs who died for their beliefs, whether during the days of the Roman Empire or the sixteenth century schism between the Catholic Church and the Church of England, the modern process recognizes 'heroic virtue' and the ability to carry out feats perceived as miracles" (Gray). As Gray explains, modern-day saints do not have to die for their cause, but they must embody "heroic virtue." Put another way, heroic virtue relates to a willingness to fight moral battles even when these efforts seem futile. This energy is the nature of hope, and hope is exactly what saints intend to inspire in others. Catherine experiences some ugliness from "stupid people" who criticize or impede her worthy protectionist mission, but she remains steadfast to her obligation to spread awareness and save lives. I think "Saint Catherine" has a wonderful ring to it.

In theme IV: Existential Stakes: Risk and Responsibility, Catherine describes some of the

critical tensions that characterize protest. Mode #16 relates Catherine's childhood apprehension leading up to her first activist experience at a Heartwood meetup. Yet she soon realizes that the Heartwood members exude a welcoming air of familiarity and share many of her concerns about the importance of protecting the environment. In mode #17 Catherine considers the impact that her early protest exposure has had on her life. She believes that parents should include their children in activist efforts from a young age to help them become socially responsible adults. Mode #18 revisits protesters' benevolent activist ethos, often laboring to benefit unknown others. In the previous chapter, Ron attends an anti-Vietnam War rally and realizes there is an entire underground network of dedicated volunteers hard at work to protect as many lives as they can (Ron.3 "underground org."). Relatedly, Catherine shares the inspiring story of an unidentified old woman who knits 500 pairs of wool socks to help the #NoDAPL protesters stay warm. Mode #19 explores the fine line nonviolent protesters walk when their peaceful demonstrations are under attack from the police and/or the military. When "THEY DROVE TANKS UP" to the peaceful #NoDAPL protest, Catherine explains that "*now* it's time to get *enraged*!" The importance of maintaining peace is central to the efficacy of the protest project. When demonstrations turn violent and imperil protesters' lives, this double-bind presents somewhat of a paradox to participants: how should activists respond to unjustified violence without compromising members' safety or the integrity of the greater cause?

Mode #20 illustrates the great personal risks Catherine and her fellow activists willingly undertake to sneak supplies past police barricades to sustain the Standing Rock cause. This activity builds on the understanding that protesting involves taking risks; even just *being there* puts oneself in potential danger because this unfolding experience in wracked with unpredictability. Mode #21 speaks to the familial comradery that forms around protest groups as

supportive members keep each other in the ethical fold of activism. Finally, mode #22 considers "the other side" of "mob mentality" – *caring*. Catherine explains that once someone cares about an issue, "then they *have* to care, and now they have to do something about it." This ethical "contagion" seems quite catching to other conscientious, like-minded people who want to take action and fight with others for worthy causes. Catherine views protesters who put their own lives on the line to help other people as modern-day saints, and this becomes particularly salient when onlookers discount and misjudge the danger protesters face along their collective quests for justice. Protesters fight for everyone – regardless of whether or not affected peoples appreciate or even realize the jeopardy surrounding this ethical labor of boundless compassion.

Next, I present the final existential theme gleaned from my participants' experiences of collective protest. Theme V features Mikhail's account of his personal evolution as an activist – starting out as a protester, then becoming an "occupant" before realizing his current role as a community organizer/revolutionary.

Theme V: Existential Time-Space: Affective Presence, Protest Trans/Formations, and Occupying Futures (Mikhail)

In this first story of theme V, Mikhail reflects on the dissatisfaction he felt during his early protest experiences:

> A long time ago, when I was an undergrad and stuff, I think the first real big protests I went to were the Iraq War protests. In which, there was, you know, a few hundred thousand people marching the street in Washington D.C. – and I had a very different worldview at that time. And that experience didn't really do much to transform my worldview, you know?
>
> I came from a very privileged background, I came . . . basically, when I look back on

> myself, I think, okay, I kinda had my head way up my ass in terms of what was actually going on in the world, and where I fit in that. And I remember, uh, my encounter with that demonstration was one in which I basically just felt like the job of people who thought that the war was bad was to show up and do what the leaders of that protest told me, and then go home. (*Mikhail* 7:22)

Mikhail #23: *It Didn't Transform My Worldview: Show Up and Go Home*

Mikhail shares his early protest involvement "a long time ago" when he attends a large anti-Iraq War[40] demonstration. Time figures prominently in many of Mikhail's descriptions, and it is interesting to note the temporal distance he places between his "undergrad" self and who he is today (in 2019 at the time of our talk). Mikhail reflects on his participation at a massive anti-Iraq War protest in Washington D.C. and describes feeling ambivalent about what had been achieved that day. He says he "had a very different worldview" during this time and the "experience didn't really do much to transform [his] worldview." Mikhail considers the effect his privileged upbringing likely had on his youthful outlook, claiming that he lacked a (reflexively-informed) worldview because he had "his head way up his ass." It seems Mikhail deploys this expression to indicate that he was self-absorbed. Mikhail explains that this Iraq War protest experience was profoundly disappointing, because it felt like a very "basic" attempt to confine the "outrage" of "a few hundred thousand" citizens within a demonstration that began and *ended*

[40] In 2003 the US invaded Iraq based on the faulty intelligence/assumption that Iraq possessed a vaguely-worded category of weaponry termed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs); after destroying most of the country's infrastructure and killing hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, it was subsequently confirmed that Iraq never had any WMDs; see Kull et al. 572.

– but there was still the matter of a corrupt and unjustified war.[41,42] Mikhail does his "job" following the leadership, showing up, and returning home, unaffected. He tells me that he did not participate in any "official" protests for a long time after this because he felt that he had wasted his time at a mass demonstration that seemed to achieve nothing. In particular, he notes that this experience did not "transform" his worldview. Here, Mikhail indicates his expectation that protests *should transform people's worldview*.

Mikhail's second narrative features modes relating to the power of some protests, such as the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, to actually transform people's worldviews:

> I remember when I first showed up at the Occupation that I went to, you know, I stepped out of the car and someone was there and gave me a hug, and they're just like, "Hey! Come on in! Welcome!" And in there, there were just all of these conversations, like, like – I was a philosophy grad student at the time – but it felt like the conversations that were happening there were more vital, and more . . . they were connected to people who actually wanted to *do something* about it. Um, and as a result, I just became *obsessed* – it was very much at an affective level.
>
> [*ME*: "Associated with what, with that space?"]
>
> With *being there*. So, I would leave and come back home and be reading for class and be like, "Fuck! I gotta go!" and just drive up to ___ [location][43] at 1 a.m. or something, for

[41] The US government actively suppressed casualty numbers during the war (2003-2011), but Iraq Body Count – a nonprofit organization that maintains a public record of the deaths following the US 2003 invasion of Iraq – has a current tally estimating between 183,249 and 205,785 civilian deaths from violence and 288,000 "total deaths including combatants."

[42] Statista maintains a tally of how many US soldiers have died in Iraq; according to their records, between 2003-2019, 4,571 US military personnel have died.

[43] Mikhail prefers that I do not identify this location; also, it does not really matter "where" it is – it is more about "what" it is.

> weeks! And I fell in love with somebody [at Occupy], and there was this period where I was like – wait a minute – am I coming here for this person that I have fallen in love with? Or am I coming here because of *this* thing? Or, am I in love with this person *because* of this thing? Or am I in love with this . . . ? And I kind of had to decide, no, it's just this *full-on thing* – it's all of it at once!! Haha, you know? (*Mikhail* 15:55)

Mikhail #24: *Occupation: "Welcome! Come on in!"*

Mikhail describes a completely different experience at Occupy than he had years earlier at the Iraq War protest. The Occupy movement[44] performs a radical reinterpretation of *public space* and "who" owns it – and perhaps more specifically, "who" actually dictates the rules of public property. The Occupy movement spread quickly as participants nationwide and even internationally set up protest camps that "occupy" public property. At this time, Occupy presents a profound departure from most contemporary protest methods, that is, marches. Mikhail feels welcome from the moment he exits his car. Outside of his vehicle, someone comes up, hugs him, and promptly invites him to "come on in!" (to this outside camp). Mikhail describes that during this time, an existential schism begins to bisect his life. He feels increasingly torn between his attraction to being at Occupy, where he has "vital" conversations with other people "who actually wanted to *do something*," and the more recessive sedentary life of a philosophy graduate student. Mikhail says, "I just became *obsessed* – it was very much at an affective level." Mode #24 marks a critical existential departure for Mikhail as he begins to feel his worldview *changing*. The next mode continues this discussion of Mikhail's unique and empowering Occupy

[44] The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement began on September 17, 2011, when hundreds of demonstrators set up a camp at Zuccotti Park, a small area of granite and trees near Wall Street in New York City – the financial epicenter of the US and world economy – to protest vast income disparity leaving the majority of US citizens struggling to support themselves while living paycheck-to-paycheck (the 99%); meanwhile, the 1%-ers swallow-up 99% of the available wealth at the expense of the other 99% of the population; see *International Business Times*, among many other information outlets, for more information.

experiences.

Mikhail #25: *I Fell in Love with This Full-On Thing – I Was Obsessed with Being There*

Mikhail details how his exposure to Occupy compels him to reconsider his entire life trajectory (it is transforming his worldview, #23). For one, he grapples with the fact that he feels more meaningfully drawn to Occupy than he does to the philosophy department he attends as a graduate student. Beyond this, I ask him to further elaborate on this "obsession" he develops. Mikhail explains that it was not only the Occupy "space" that attracted him, but the *being there-ness* with other people who also want to explore the powerful potential of this collective embodiment (Catherine.21 "family/hope and guilt"). A unified front defying official orders to disperse and evict the premises – they simply, firmly, and fully *refuse to leave here*. Contrary to the Iraq War protest, this presence-extension sees no "end" in sight; rather, Occupy tests its own revolutionary resilience, one day at a time.[45] Several scholars have been quick to critique the Occupy movement for lacking a list of "agreed upon demands,"[46] but people who approach OWS from this perspective miss the bigger picture of what this movement achieved, was, and is actually about.

Mikhail describes how difficult it becomes for him to focus on his graduate coursework because he is so drawn to being at Occupy. He mentions that he falls in love with someone at Occupy during this time, adding yet another layer of dialectical relational complexity to the experience. It seems to give him pause as he wonders aloud "what" he loves so much about being there. Is he in love with Occupy because this person is here? Or perhaps, he is in love with

[45] For more statistics and information about the Occupy Wall Street movement, see Goyette.

[46] Curiously, the vast majority of scholarly work about OWS focuses on its "failure" and neglects many of its remarkable contributions; for more on this see Roberts' synthesis of five books about the OWS that each identify various internal organizational determinants that the authors deem responsible for OWS' "failure."

this person because they are at Occupy? Mikhail tells me: "I kind of had to decide, no, it's just this *full-on thing* – it's all of it at once!" I think it is important for people to engage in this kind of personal reflection and meditate about how we feel about ourselves, the others around us, and the kind of social environments we want to be in. The Occupy experience changes Mikhail's whole outlook – "it's all of it at once!" It is an Occupation that does not just "go home" – it is constantly being created and reproduced by people doing this radical thing together. I imagine this milieu is definitely an appealing place to find a like-minded lover.

Occupy sites inject an awareness of cultural happenings by staging living spectacles of inhabitation. OWS exhibited a spatially-anchored collective that contracted together in solidarity, injecting its roots down through concrete pavements as it spread the seeds of its possibilities into the cultural imaginary. I remember following OWS on the news and feeling shocked and inspired by participants' willingness to embody their dedication to the cause to such perceivably "uncomfortable" extents. It was amazing to see the sprawling tent city form on the sidewalks and parks surrounding Wall Street, as well as in several other locations across the United States. Protesters rebel against capitalist insiders by weathering the outside as they transform cityscapes into colorful piece-knit encampments, creating a spectacle that seems impossible for corporate elites to overlook or ignore.

Despite troubling bandwagons of retrospective critics eager to dismiss the entire Occupy movement and its many participants as "failures," OWS protests *did not fail* in their core mission to make a statement about financial inequality and contribute to an emergent discourse. The Occupy message was loud and clear to anyone willing to consider its *truth*: 99% of Americans are not wealthy elites, and we all deserve the opportunity to support ourselves and our families with a livable minimum wage. The federal minimum wage is tasked with preventing people with

less means from being forced to work more than one job, or two jobs, or three jobs, just to sustain their existence. It seems backwards that some of the hardest working people in our country (perhaps factory workers and hard laborers in construction or coal mining, etc.) destroy their bodies and health for so little pay, often lack access to affordable quality healthcare, and often die long before they even have the chance to retire – that is, if retirement was ever even possible.

Modes #24 and #25 relate Mikhail's transformative experiences while participating in the Occupy movement. His descriptions of these events highlight the vast power that arises when activists transform common understandings of two key existential protest themes – time and space. The Occupy movement was extremely impactful in its rebellion against the greed and false economic propaganda of capitalist doctrine peddling the myth that "trickle down" will happen. In the meantime, "the bottom line" leaves little time and no space for other less privileged people to ride the tides of success. Next, Mikhail continues his discussion of people-power in relation to occupation and similar anarchist strategies of subversion:

> I was [at Standing Rock] for a little while, yeah. Um, which was . . . you know a 10,000-person commune that was formed in the hills of North Dakota – and *that* was interesting. And really, just this totally fascinating experience, socially. And there were these same kinds of tensions that you see all the time in protest movements today, between those who are kind of trying to manage it for a spectacle, and those who are physically interested in obstructing the power of the police to do what they're doing [. . .].
>
> So, protest – being in the streets or whatever – is an important way to meet people. And then at another level, when you have a group of people who, you know, have for whatever reason decided that they're not moving – they're not gonna budge. Uh. *That* is

> an extraordinarily powerful experience that a lot of people don't get in many protests that happen. Because as soon as you make that . . . you cross over that line and decide – alright, no matter what the people in power tell us, right? *We're not moving from here*. Or, we're going to do this thing – and if you want to move these bodies, you can, but we're going to make it *hard* [. . .].
>
> And I think that, existentially, that's a moment of people coming into a different level of responsibility for themselves. And then, the next thing is when you got a bunch of people who've gone through those experiences together and now are loyal to that ability to say no to power. Um, and then you can coordinate with those people, and you can make plans that actually elevate and escalate, you know, a situation to express a kind of popular power. And ultimately, you know, the . . . what *I* see as necessary, you know, maybe there'll never be a time in which there's no governing structures or corporations that they are serving . . . . (*Mikhail* 27:21; 33:54; 35:09)

Mikhail #26: *Tactical Tensions: Spectacle or Obstruction?*

Mikhail recalls his time at the Standing Rock "commune" around the time of its peak attendance. He explains that it is a "totally fascinating experience, socially." #NoDAPL protesters at Standing Rock deploy a rural Occupation strategy that Mikhail seems to recognize. He notes that the protesters form a commune, which suggests some measure of cooperative organization aspiring to sustain supplies for the thousands of people on site. As discussed earlier, during this time Catherine and some fellow Heartwood members sneak-in supplies at night (Catherine.20 "afraid of situation"). Mikhail finds the Standing Rock experience "fascinating" yet also hindered by the "same kinds of tensions you see all the time in protest movements today." He explains that these tensions correspond with two divergent protest agendas – protest

as a “managed” visual spectacle and protest as a strategic “physical” disruption. Put another way, these approaches contrast nonviolent “traditional” (marching) protesting with more radical “anarchist” (obstructive) protesting. The differences between these protest forms not only pertain to their imagined or anticipated “goal” or “endgame,” but also involve the amount of time, space, money (resources), and rap sheet lines available for the risks of this participation. For instance, if you “obstruct the power of the police,” you can probably expect to be arrested, booked, charged – and possibly even battered during the exchange. It is also possible for the two perspectives to coexist, and this happens all the time in mass protests when some folks become rowdier than others. Mikhail seems attuned to the visual-functional versatility of protest possibilities. The next mode of this theme delves deeper into collective disobedience.

Mikhail #27: *Collective Loyalty and Crossing the Line:* We *are not Moving from* Here

Mikhail says that protest, “being in the streets or whatever – is a good way to meet people.” He describes protesting in the streets as the “first level,” which is primarily a social opportunity to link up with other activists for future collaborations. The next (second) “level” actualizes when a group of people decide that, no matter what happens, “they’re not moving – they’re not gonna budge.” Mikhail explains that “*that*” collective anchoring of dedicated deadweight bodies “is an extraordinarily powerful experience” that few people ever get to be a part of. This collective unification into an experience of being one immobile body of people extends Ron’s “aerial dot” contentedness from earlier, and K’s empowering sensation of fighting “as one large body” (Ron.5; K.9). But Mikhail envisions collective gatherings for their untapped potential as a concrete physical resource – an impediment to the flow of order – that relentlessly pushes and tests the limits of civil disobedience.

Civil Rights protesters often deployed similar embodied tactics in sit-in demonstrations.

Participants would arrive at the target location, fully anticipating their upcoming arrest. As Mikhail expresses, such demonstrations of stillness, silence, poise, and ragdoll-like posturing (to make it as difficult as possible for another person to move one's body) collectively challenge civil laws and "cross a line." Once on the other side of the "line" (or law), Mikhail says there is a sense of freedom and comradery in knowing that, "no matter what the people in power tell us," "*we're not moving*." Mikhail offers a radically different view of what protesting can be. Catherine seems similarly inclined to do what needs to be done and take risks (Catherine.20 "afraid of situation"). Most of the other participants in this study anticipate protest as a movement or a march, with speeches and signs – a progression of chanting with starting and ending times and corresponding locations. As Mikhail explains earlier in mode #23, many conventional protests that have an "end" point leave him feeling frustrated and ineffective ("transform worldview").

I will take a moment to consider Mikhail's three protest "levels" in action. Imagine a large protest in, let's say, downtown Boston, MA, with 20,000 people marching through the streets. The protest is scheduled to span the handful of hours from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. By 1 p.m. the streets are *packed* with people – and then, suddenly or slowly, everybody – every single person who is able to, sits down. *Imagine* the potential of this peaceful, dense herd of humanity simply and wholly refusing to budge. Perhaps people have even prepared for this sitting and bring picnic baskets and items of comfort. This activity performs the "second level" of protest Mikhail describes. For the sake of efficacy in this imagined demonstration, I wonder how many police officers work for the Boston Police Department. There are 2,144 officers according to the Wikipedia site for the police department.[47] Unfortunately, the Boston Police Department's

[47] See "Boston Police Department" for more; additionally, The City of Boston Police Department's website is: www.boston.gov/departments/pol

website does not provide the number of officers or their personal information – which makes sense for safety and privacy reasons. It seems that quashing this peaceful picnic-in with such a limited numbers of police officers presents quite a challenge – not to mention the inevitable media optics of what this action might involve and look like. I understand what Mikhail is describing, and now I want to try this. Hopefully there are others out there, too, who might join us for a worthy cause. Mode #27 features Mikhail's descriptions of the first two "levels" of protest. Level one is attending a protest and marching through the streets, and is perhaps more of a social networking *phase*, in Mikhail's estimation. Level two calls for one to surrender their body to the risks of participating in demonstrations of civil disobedience, fully intending to impede the ability of power to function without resistance.

Mikhail describes the third level of protest involvement as the epiphany "of people coming to a different level of responsibility, for themselves." It is a transcendental realization that people-power exists and that we can be a part of it, should we choose to (Ron.5 "aerial dot"; K.9 "one large body"; Catherine.17 "kids/social responsibility"). Mikhail describes how the hazards of executing such collective gambles inspire a loyalty to this ability to empower ourselves with others. It seems Mikhail views the third level as an existential awakening (transformation) of feeling responsible for others' fates, which feels reminiscent of Catherine's talk about taking risks and staying loyal to her protest family fold (Catherine.20 "afraid of situation"; Catherine.21 "family/hope and guilt"). Catherine and Mikhail seem to share similar perspectives on protest; each focuses on the larger picture while simultaneously on the more mundane, taken-for-granted resources essential to sustaining any cause. Ensuring that participants have access to food, water, and shelter necessitates some activists to take on greater risks than others. Catherine and Mikhail appear willing to put themselves in harm's way in order

to do what needs to be done to sustain and advance their causes. Mikhail trails off at the end of his statement as he muses about the future and "popular power": "And ultimately," "maybe there'll never be a time in which there's no governing structures or corporations they are serving . . . ." It seems that Mikhail senses that he will most likely be waging this battle for the rest of his life, and although he may never "officially" succeed, he accepts this challenge because he feels responsible. This is the third "level" of participating in collective protest. Like Catherine, he is in the activist fold for life (Catherine.21 "family/hope and guilt").

> Next, Mikhail discusses his views on anarchy, seductive spaces, and social revolution:
>
> One concept that, um, some anarchists talk about – and, you know, I'm using this word "anarchist" – I'm not even sure if I am an anarchist right now, whatever. But, people, they talk about, uh, seduction as a revolutionary strategy. Which is the idea that, you know . . . people are always talking about consensus, and these kinds of ways of making decisions that are . . . that try to bring the fullest rationality that we have, out, collectively. But there's also this acknowledgement – there's certain limits to that – in terms of how people, uh, how people *actually* make decisions – it's very rarely actually a rational choice. It's more like a kind of thing that one *experiences* – especially making the kinds of decisions that ultimately change their lives. And so, the question is: how do you create spaces that are seductive, that make people want to be in them?
>
> That's why this concept of affect might be important – that it's not, uh, it's not a kind of narrow or, linear rationality that makes sense of protests or movements or something – that's a part of it. And often people like have already done that work but they're still inactive, and then it's something else that brings them into something like that. (*Mikhail* 20:53)

Notes on Anarchy and Rationalism

Prior to considering mode #28, it seems useful for the present discussion to consider briefly what "anarchy" is, although defining the term is itself a somewhat paradoxical endeavor. Like the activities it describes, the concept of anarchy is heavily debated, and its characterizations resist stable "definitions." Even Mikhail himself is not exactly sure whether or not he is "an anarchist right now, whatever." Anarchy means many things to various actors across vast cultural histories. At its etymological origins, anarchy draws its meaning/s from the Greek word *anarachos*, in which "*an*" means "no" and "*archos*" means "ruler" – thus, a state of having no ruling power.[48] There are three primary denotative understandings of anarchy: (1) the absence of a governing body; (2) the rejection or denial of an established ruling authority or governing hierarchy; and (3) a utopian freedom in which people live without laws or government (see footnote 48). These broad definitions illustrate that anarchy is neither inherently violent nor destructive on its own. However, it is rather confusing considering that it *is* an apolitical "political" alternative.

Anarchy frequently casts a tall shadow of suspicion and an air of reckless danger with its name, but this is perhaps because most people have no idea what it "means" (which plays a big part in the fundamental "imaginary" debates about its possibilities). Consequently, perhaps no one really knows what "anarchy" is or means, and that is also perhaps why it is so potentially powerful. Existentialism frequently follows a similar vein of mystification. In some ways, anarchy provides a philosophical space for considering alternative power relations outside of the current status quo. Accordingly, this apolitical nature and institutional circumnavigation creates transcendent possibilities at the same time it stokes a reactionary fear of itself. In other words,

[48] See "Anarchy," *Merriam-Webster*.

many people might prefer at least to be familiar with their oppressors rather than to take their chances in a revolution against them with indefinite processes and outcomes. This is the heart of the anarchist paradox. Mikhail considers anarchy as a political strategy in comparison with the modernist idea of "rationalism."

Rationalism is an outmoded conception of "logic" that advertises the idea that "people" have universal qualities and make similar decisions for the same reasons. Rationalism serves the interests of stabilized objective truths and prioritizes named concepts (objectivity) over the prospect of gathering new knowledge from diversely embodied phenomenal (subjective) experiences. Rationalism fails to account for people's intersectional *identity* facets or diverse inter/cultural *experiences* (Wendt 392). It is widely accepted that rationalist/modernist/positivist conceptions that rely on causal/deterministic/stable/truths are dated and irrelevant to the postmodern situation (Markie). Rationalism has little to say about embodiment and, as Mikhail contrasts it, also has little to do with how people actually make their choices.

Mikhail #28: *Anarchist Seductions and Spatial Revolution*

Mikhail tells me that "some anarchists talk about – and you know, I'm using this word 'anarchist' – I'm not even sure if I am an anarchist right now, whatever. But, people, they talk about, uh, seduction as a revolutionary strategy." It is interesting that Mikhail wants to share an anarchist concept, but he also wants to clarify that he is unsure if he is currently living as an anarchist "right now, whatever." He could mean a number of things by this musing, but I wonder if he says this because he feels he "isn't being anarchist enough lately," or maybe because he is heading in a different direction. Aside from this speculation, Mikhail shares that anarchists are interested in creating seductive spaces "as a revolutionary strategy." Recalling Mikhail's earlier discussion of the three "levels" of intensifying one's protest engagements, each stage revolves

around advancing the formation of a collective identity whose adherents feel comfortable together in space.

Mikhail's first level is marching in protest to meet other like-minded people (#26). Through this networking, a collective may now plan future events together (second level) that target the power sources they wish to obstruct (third level) (#27). These collective experiences foster comradery, loyalty, and empowerment within the group, potentially propelling them to do more things together. The heart of this progression is the collectivity – not the physical location. This seems to be what Mikhail means by making spaces "seductive." A seductive space is ideally filled with like-minded people (Ron.4). It does seem important to experience each "level" of protest involvement, and Mikhail wonders how people think that they make their decisions today[49] – is it informed by rationality or shaped by something else entirely?

Mikhail #29: *Affect Might be Important – It's Rarely a Rational Choice*

Mikhail tells me that "the question is: how do you create spaces that are seductive, that make people want to be in them?" He discounts the ideal prospect of achieving "consensus" early on, which is a rationalist conception. Instead, he contemplates "how people *actually* make decisions – it's very rarely actually a rational choice." Mikhail continues, suggesting that people make choices based on their "*experiences* – especially [in/when] making the kinds of decisions that ultimately change their lives" (Mikhail.23 "transform worldview"). He considers an existential rippling over the world of collective action, as the sensations of emotional and physical solidarity bond participants through the vested belonging of genuine togetherness (Ron.4 "like-minded"; K.9 "one large body"; Catherine.21 "family/hope and guilt"). This is a seductive space. Perhaps Mikhail's greater concern is how to get more people to join these

[49] The clunky wording of "how people *think* that they make their decisions today" is intentional. Without overly psychologizing, I think it is worthwhile to consider whatever this process may be ("today" is 2019).

spaces to connect with one another.

Mikhail suggests that "this concept of affect might be important." Now that we no longer calculate "rationality" as a consistent monolithic enterprise, I suppose we might turn to other people to help us figure out this diverse world together. Mikhail also mentions that "linear rationality [cannot] make sense of protests or movements or something" – because these are embodied, relational, connective, emotional *experiences*. The other people t/here with us constitute the very existence of *this space* of shared experience, something many lonely people desire and deserve to feel. We build this space together, not alone. Mikhail seems confident that people make their decisions to participate more in accordance with their past experiences and how the people in these situations treated them and made them feel, not by the interpersonal oblivion/discounting of rationalism. Mikhail hopes that protest experiences are seductive enough to keep participants "in the fold" (Catherine.21 "family/hope and guilt"). After all, Mikhail still seems to have some form(s) of revolution in mind.

> Mikhail considers protest, power, and transformation in the final narrative of this chapter:
>
> Often, the way that I will distinguish it is, you know, the protest aspect of something is the part that's like trying to relate with and pressure people in power, you know? And that's only one aspect of it. There's these other things I'm saying too, right? The attempt to create a seductive space in which people are transforming their relationships. But there's another aspect of it, and this is the attempt to express an oppositional power – which is *really something*, you know? [. . .]
>
> The risk of people thinking that protesting is a "safe" activity risks . . . the . . . um. But the risk is that *that* erases the experience at the start of it. Which is that experience of *moral outrage* – of the perception of an ethical line in the world. I'm criticizing the idea

of positivity without an ethical line that allows you to say, "NO." (*Mikhail* 22:31; 117:56)

Mikhail #30: *Transforming Relationships and Expressing Oppositional Power*: *Saying "NO"*

Mikhail is clear about what "protest" is: it is a collective effort that is "trying to relate with and pressure people in power." This may sound obvious to some, but it took Mikhail a fair amount of time to realize why his participation in the anti-Iraq War demonstration felt pointless. That protest failed to "transform his worldview" because it coordinated its ending from the beginning (Mikhail.23). In fairness, in the early 2000s the United States at large was perhaps a bit out of touch with collective protesting and how media ought to cover such action, and organizers also likely faced technological challenges in planning future directions to sustain the enthusiasm of participants. During this time, social media was just beginning and organizational networking was probably difficult in terms of linking participation in national events with members of one's local communities. But "today" in 2019, Mikhail knows that the secret power of protesting lies in the strength of loyal members in a collective who *realize* how powerful they can be. As Mikhail describes throughout our interview, when people have opportunities to connect and "put their lives in common," they are capable of collectively transforming the spaces surrounding them into something completely new and invigorating. Once these relational transformations bond a group together through the responsibility, love, purpose, and accountability of being part of something bigger, this "one large body" has the ability to "express an oppositional power – which is *really something*" (Ron.4; K.9; Mr. Black.13 "mob mentality").

Mikhail keenly identifies perhaps one of collective protesting's greatest challenges: figuring out how to balance the untapped potential and unpredictability of a people-power event attending to a cause, with the worthy concern for ensuring participants' safety. Mikhail seems to prioritize the importance of delivering a strong message to those in power by obstructing their

ability to oppress others, over safety concerns. This follows the progression the three levels of protest intensification Mikhail discussed in mode #27. Mikhail practices his activism at the third level of protest involvement, which also happens to be its most potentially self-sacrificing and unsafe. At times, collective protesting is dangerous, as Catherine described earlier at #NoDAPL (Catherine.20 "afraid of situation"). Mikhail observes that any expectation of a "safe" protest "erases the experience at the start of it." Mikhail highlights that sometimes things are just *wrong*, and there must be "the perception of an ethical line in the world." When this line is crossed by people's government or relatedly accountable actors, there ought to be "*moral outrage*." Mikhail makes a significant point that it is important to maintain public spaces for people to express their disgust and disdain. If protest is "kid-proofed," it threatens to become normalized and possibly pointless in its mission. However, Catherine evolved into a lifelong activist from her childhood experiences with Heartwood protesters who wanted her to pass on the love (Catherine.17 "kids/social responsibility). Perhaps Mikhail focuses on the importance of people *knowing* that they have a responsibility to know where their ethical "lines" are, what it might take for them to "have had enough," and whether they wait to act or never do. Catherine embodies this perpetual activity. It seems that all five participants would agree that if/when people lose the sense to act when their own or others' human rights are violated, this loss reflects a choice one makes to safeguard their own solitude above the solidarity of standing together.

Chapter 4 has explored existential protest themes pertaining to risk, connection, responsibility, space, and time. Catherine's and Mikhail's accounts each embody significant existential aspects composing the protest experience. In theme IV: Existential Stakes, Catherine's stories about her various environmental activist involvements illustrate the central role that community membership plays in long-term protest engagements. While she is hesitant

as a child before her first Heartwood experience with her mother, Catherine soon blossoms into a dedicated lifelong activist. At times her commitment to environmentalism puts her in danger, but she accepts these risks as part of the experience.

Mikhail considers time, space, anarchy, and affect in theme V, Existential Time-Space. He tests notions of personal fulfillment and what a protest ought to accomplish, insisting that collective protest should play a role in transforming people's worldviews. Across such lifelong dedication to ethical causes, Mikhail seeks the company of other protesters who are willing to do whatever it takes to populate and "occupy" revolutionary spaces in the service of change. These cooperative engagements consider the power of participating in collective protest with others to create and sustain revolutionary communities that embrace and act upon shared understandings of activist ethics, inclusivity, moral outrage, action, and empowerment. Thus, Chapter 4 has explored the power of dedicated protesters to challenge authority, take risks, redefine sovereign spaces, and form emergent communities that collectively envision and work together towards a better future for everyone.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter in this dissertation. In it I will review what I have accomplished in this work, including responding to my research questions, clarifying key insights, identifying some study limitations, and locating future directions for this topic of the lived experience of participating in collective protest.

CHAPTER 5

INSIGHTS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE EXPLORATION

I write this concluding dissertation chapter from my home in Southern Illinois as massive protest uprisings transpire around the world. It is December 2019 and civil unrest is rocking governments worldwide, including those of Bolivia, Chile, China, Columbia, Ecuador, England, France, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Spain, and the United States (and very possibly in countless other locations) (*The Guardian*; White). Many of these diverse social and political movements have been actively protesting for most of this year, and some of them have been simmering for lifetimes. Collective protests embody a relational existential confluence of vulnerability and potential. These demonstrations confront people's common expectations of time, space, strangers, power, danger, and wellbeing. Protesting manifests itself as the active flow of its membership fills the public spaces that are typically otherwise preoccupied with the everyday business of transportation, commerce, politics, work, and school. Participating in collective demonstrations involves live unfolding events that are unpredictable and largely disorganized. Yet somehow, a typical Tuesday on Somewhere Street transforms into an extraordinarily different phenomenon, as beings who feel concerned in some way gather together to explore the magnitude of their collective unease. These gatherings possibilize change. After all, people assemble in public protest when something existentially threatening is happening, the prospect that not everyone feels threatened notwithstanding. Across numerous ethical, social, political, and/or desperate reasons that people engage in protest, there is always something important to them at stake. Collective protesting therefore registers the ethical attendance of actively concerned beings.

Accordingly, this dissertation has explored the experience of participating in collective

protest, primarily through the voices of five seasoned protester-activists. In this concluding chapter, I will review what I have accomplished in the previous four chapters, revisit the three primary research questions driving this investigation, consider some limitations of this study, and discuss some prospects for future research that arise from the implications of the present work.

To begin this inquiry, in Chapter 1, I shared my protest story about participating in the 2017 Women's March and reviewed extant social scientific literature addressing collective protest. There, I critically examined seven primary approaches that theorize collective action in various ways. I considered how they built upon and responded to each other across time and noted specific limitations in their approaches in accounting for individual persons acting together within collectives. The majority of these approaches relied on empirical observation from non-participating researchers. I argued that empirical approaches to human study often produce distanced findings that exemplify four reductive tendencies that Joseph J. Kockelmans termed the theoretical, the formal, the functional, and the quantitative (Kockelmans 243).

In Chapter 2, I described the assumptions of existential phenomenology informing my inquiry and detailed the specific research methods I employed in performing this investigation. Existential phenomenology appreciates human existence as a concretely embodied experience of engaging a unique and unfolding relational life. I focused on the more developed accounts of five practiced protesters and considered their experiences using existential phenomenology in relation to six basic existential realms: self, other, embodiment, time, space, and choice/freedom. I explored my participants' self-descriptions about engaging in collective protest and discovered that their protest experiences disclosed distinctive yet related embodied contingencies that make these public demonstrations meaningful experiences. I considered how participants' accounts disclose their collective protest experiences in contingent and relational existential terms. In

doing so, I witnessed in more developed ways how collective protest involves an existential interchange of participants' actual lived experiences of becoming part of a bigger collective as it unfolds in real time. Participants' descriptions revealed five concrete existential themes of participating in collective protest, along with 30 variant phenomenological modes concerning interviewees' accounts of shared and divergent features of this immersive experience.

In Chapter 3, I introduced the five practiced protesters whose experiences and words inform the understandings of protest participation that are examined in detail across the third and fourth chapters. Following these introductions, in Chapter 3 I considered three themes pertaining to initiating and realizing one's participation in collective protest. The narratives of Ron, K, and Mr. Black respectively dramatized key themes and modes of (1) activation and protest involvement, (2) embodiment and collective magnification, and (3) cultural contingencies of freedom. In turn, Chapter 4 explored Catherine's depictions of the existential stakes of protesting including (4) the risks, responsibilities, and community connections of collective protest. Then, I explored Mikhail's narrations of (5) the transformative existential spaces of collective protest and how they carry the potential to refashion people's conventional space-time understandings of boundaries, belonging, and power.

From its outset, I conducted this research to address three primary questions:

RQ 1: What is the lived experience of embodied participation with others in protest?

RQ 2: What do participants' descriptions illustrate about how collective protest involvement unfolds across time?

RQ 3: What do individuals' accounts of their subjective experiences reveal about the communicative accomplishment of engaging in collective action?

Having learned from the five interviewees' in-depth accounts of their experiences participating

in collective protest, I will now address these questions. My first research question asks, what is the lived experience of embodied participation with others in protest?

Lived Experience and Embodied Participation: Journeying Selves and Sea Changes

Researching lived experience calls for an attendance to concrete lifeworlds. This dissertation focused on five seasoned protesters' descriptions of their activated lifeworlds. I employed existential phenomenology to explore my interviewees' narratives about their self-journeys in protest as meaningful quests to encounter and act alongside like-minded others. My interviewees emphasized that collective protesting is an interactive, relational, public performance of solidarity manifested by each protester's *embodied participation*. Many empirical investigative protocols, such as those considered in Chapter 1, overlook the lived experience at the heart of this immersive hands-on activity by deriving their findings from a nonparticipant's visual scrutiny. In contrast, my interviewees offered substantive self-descriptions about distinct ways that their embodied experiences in collective protest disclose diverse lifeworld contingencies with consequential implications for their existential attendance. Collective protesting stages cultural performances of self and others as individuals step outside of their private lives to be together on the scene of these unrehearsed public demonstrations of collaborative dissent. Thus, the embodied experience of participating in collective protest encompasses multiple layers of relational personhood.

What attracts people to join others in collective protest? My participants described a spectrum of catalyzing cultural events that inspired each of them to search for something they could do to take action. They voiced similar mindsets overcome by senses of frustration, alienation, fear, and confusion that compelled them to pursue the cathartic company of others with shared concerns. Ron was jolted into action by the Vietnam War's rising death toll; K was

angry about President Trump's election; Mr. Black took action when he sensed injustice against marginalized people. Though disillusioned by early anti-Iraq War protests, the Occupy movement reignited Mikhail's enthusiasm and drew him back in. Catherine became involved as a child whose mother was a member of Heartwood, participating in their efforts to protect the environment for future generations. Thus, collective protests appear to attract members who sense that something outside of their control threatens their and/or others' existence. That phenomenon constitutes an existential crisis. These participants described a variety of concerns that drove them to make personal choices to put themselves "out there" in the struggle for a better world. Such a protest journey begins as one departs the comfort and security of their home to inhabit a different space, a promising public place in which they can see and be seen in the company of others on a similar mission. Collective protesting thus registers civil unrest as distinct individuals band together in public to demand a cultural, social, or political sea change from members who want *to see such change happening now*.

Collective protesting involves speaking with one's body, at times, without even emitting audible words. Each interviewee discussed their protest participation as an outlet to "have their voice heard." My participants described their experiences in the thick of a collective protest gathering in which voices meet, compete, and merge, accentuating the cooperative commotion and riveting potential such dedicated turnouts radiate. K and other interviewees described how collective protesters embody a potentially transformative people-power that witnesses itself in unfolding action, performing together as "one large body." What often begins as a personal realization that something bad is happening or likely will happen soon, actually attracts many more individuals seeking the collective support of other sympathetic faces experiencing similar existential watersheds. At a minimum, collective protesting requires one powerful possibility:

individuals who are willing to show up. Collective protests present an open-ended question simultaneously posed and responded to by willful participants' considered positions and embodied activities. Protesters assume a collective presence through their orchestrated footsteps and chants, as a heightened awareness of shared existential vulnerabilities serves to transition these assemblies into a collective empowerment of ethical resolve. Disengaged objective observers cannot convey the flesh-and-blood cultural phenomenon of engaged and lived collective protest. By maintaining distance from subjects of study, "objective" observational empirical research lacks the theoretical and methodological commitments to absorb and communicate the abundant meanings experienced and expressed by protesters. Collective protesting embroils journeying selves as they inhabit and amplify the embodied, interconnected, existential, and phenomenological sensations of this motivated experience.

Next, I respond to my second research question: What do participants' descriptions illustrate about how collective protest involvement unfolds across time?

Collective Protest Timespans and Landscapes: Boundaries, Commitment, and Power

As previously considered, participating in collective protest registers phenomenological sensations in these vital interchanges of self, others, embodiment, time, space, and freedom/choice. Protest involves an active "doing" that tests one's political agency by offering the opportunity to freely choose to assume civic positions with others in time and space. Such demonstrations risk individuals' embodied being in confrontations with power. My second research question concerns temporal and spatial dimensions within the lived experience of participating in collective protest. In phenomenological and existential philosophies, time and space are bound together in embodied experience. In other words, time and space are concretely and mutually co-constitutive; we cannot *experience* one without the other. For example, we

experience our self as some/body in space through the materiality of our physical presence across time. Likewise, we experience the passage of time through the repetitious extensions of our embodied presence in/to somewhere – constituting potential relationships. If we stand in a public park and something flashes by too quickly for us to notice it, we have not experienced that thing. This conjunction of emplacement and duration illustrates the interdependence of these existential realms in composing our awareness of lived moments. Indeed, the passage of time sequences events, which simultaneously occur in space and create meaningfully associated relationships. The three phenomenological dimensions of time – past, present, future – all perpetuate our existence even as they persist beyond our capacity to grasp them fully (Sartre, *Being* 159).

As my participants described, collective protests form during periods of cultural upheaval as each member embodies their choice to take part in this symbolic labor of dissent. Importantly, these participants' descriptions about their protesting involvements revealed distinct time-space understandings concerning their expectations of *risk*, preferences about the *type* of protest, level of *commitment*, anticipated *duration* of their participation, and prospective *goals*. That is, if or once such terms are met, would "this accomplishment" end one's contribution and/or provide some semblance of *closure*? Ron detailed that his participation in collective protest occurs when "despicable things" happen politically and he feels an "obligation" to act, such as during the Vietnam War and after Donald Trump's presidential election. K told me she actively participates in a number of protest marches for a variety of causes because of a "civic duty" she feels she owes to her fellow citizens. K said she inherited this calling from her own ancestors' blood, sweat, and tears. Mr. Black described his appreciation for the cultural permission to even demonstrate in public without risking one's freedom. He contrasted First Amendment protections guaranteeing United States citizens the right to publicly air their political grievances with some

of his overseas military experiences when he witnessed autocratic leaders who made demonstrators "disappear" if they dared to speak out in public. Catherine framed her protesting engagement as a lifelong commitment that revolves around her conviction that she has a responsibility to take action on behalf of other vulnerable people. Finally, Mikhail described similar understandings about protest as his initial engagements evolved into a lifestyle of long-term participation and continuous strategizing about how best to disrupt status quo abuses of power.

Each of my five interviewees revealed related yet distinct understandings of their participation in collective protest with regard to the existential-phenomenological time-space facets of protest risk, type, commitment level, duration, and goals or closure. Ron explained that his dedication to take action reflects his allegiance to the relational reversibility of the Golden Rule. For him, collective protest is something he *makes* time for and willingly goes "*out of his way*" to do in order to help others who "can't help themselves." For example, during the Vietnam War, and again with the Women's Marches, Ron encountered overwhelming cultural strains that forced him to make the significant choice to *do something now*. K described her protest engagements as a way for her to connect with and honor the sacrifices her ancestors "fought and died for" – "whether they were Black or women or Black women." Consequently, K chooses to be active across diverse causes to preserve the rights denied to her ancestors, demonstrating her freedom to dissent and safeguarding this privilege for her own and others' descendants. For K, particular *causes* are less important than the democratic fortification she performs through her consistent participation and having her voice heard. Mr. Black appears more "free-lance" in some of his protest involvements. But when Mr. Black feels that the lives or identities of his loved ones are threatened, such as his godson, he shows up in his military uniform, risking his

own freedom in order to demonstrate his support for others' freedom of expression, which he has fought so hard to secure.

Catherine shared that she no longer considers her protesting efforts as a "choice" she makes. Yet, ironically, she also continues to respond to emerging challenges like the spread of destructive fracking ventures in her ongoing efforts to protest policies that hinder other persons' well-being. Without hesitation, Catherine willingly risks her own safety to protect the environment, her activist community, and nameless marginalized others who need her help. At times, Catherine's willing participation in her "family fold" has even put herself in *real danger*. Her boundless allegiance to peaceful protest is compromised when a co-participant surprises her and unveils his loaded gun. Finally, Mikhail described his protest mission to help people "put their lives in common" and bring about the collective realization that no one really has to make "a choice" to participate. In his view, people in protest ought to be prepared to do whatever it takes to achieve their unfolding goals, including being arrested, battered by police, or living on public sidewalks for extended periods of time. Mikhail believes that not utilizing one's own liberty or denying other people the freedom to influence their own futures affects everyone. For Catherine and Mikhail, the awareness that others need their help transcends expectations about end-games and "going home." They understand participating in collective protest as part of leading an answerable life. These transformative ethical epiphanies draw them closer to other like-minded people and communities who share their sense of responsibility to create a better future world.

My interviewees described a range of strategic functions that *time* and *space* play in the evolving choices of their engagements in collective protest. According to the *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary, time is defined as a "nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events

which succeed one another from past through present to future."[50] Time is thus immaterial (nonspatial) and tracks the chronology (duration) and sequencing (ordering) of unfolding activity. Space is a material realm that realizes "a period of time: its duration"; it is boundless and only "limited in extent by one, two, or three dimensions: distance, area, [and] volume."[51] In other words, space becomes apparent to experience as a location by three delimiting quantifiable capacities. Distance is one-dimensional and pertains to the physical separation between two or more points in space; it also serves as an expression for emotional closeness or remoteness between people.[52] Area is the two-dimensional surface or field of activity, for example, the expanse of a football field's surface area as measured by the length and width of the physical site.[53] Finally, volume is the amount of cubic space occupied by three-dimensional objects; it also describes degrees of sonic loudness and quantities of bulk materials or goods.[54] We realize our existence as embodied beings who act across times and spaces in successive experiences of being present in life's shifting contexts as well as in relation to other subjects.

A protester can only physically be in one place at a time. Several interviewees told me that at times this reality forces them to choose between competing worthy events scheduled at the same time. Science fiction author Ray Cummings once wrote that "time is what keeps everything from happening at once" (371). I would add that spatial requirements similarly keep everything from happening in the same location. Acknowledging these parameters, what spatiotemporal attributes and developing contingencies make collective protest experience

[50] See "Time," *Merriam-Webster*.

[51] See "Space," *Merriam-Webster*.

[52] See "Distance," *Merriam-Webster*.

[53] See "Area," *Merriam-Webster*.

[54] See "Volume," *Merriam-Webster*.

eventful and memorable to attendees? While my interviewees all described their sober awareness that protest spaces can be dangerous, they also insisted that the risks encountered there are collectively shared. In their eyes, spending time with others in protest events strengthens communal potentials of power, purpose, and the possibility of transcending the often-troubling emotional states that drew these individuals together initially. Existential philosophy considers an individual's distinct "situation" as the concrete lifeworld they inherit and subsequently inhabit as they make their way in the world. Existence refers to an active being's becoming as they engage with distinctive existential contingencies of their concretely embodied conditions and circumstances (Sartre, *Being* 727). My participants' accounts revealed that a *protester's situation* unfolds incrementally across their existential engagements of showing up to a site, joining a collective, and experiencing the live convergence of multiple relational dimensions that define this activity. Prior to collective protesters' occupations, the empty spaces beneath their feet were indistinct yet boundless with potential. Through active choices and responses to emerging contingencies, my interviewees related how engaging in collective protest in shared time and space can transform mundane terrains into revolutionary realms of collective connection, belonging, and hope.

Next, I respond to my third and final research question, which is: What do individuals' accounts of their subjective experiences reveal about the communicative accomplishment of engaging in collective action?

Collective Protest as Existential Communication: The Situation, Common Grounds, and Relational Transcendence

I begin my response to this question by first considering what constitutes a "communicative accomplishment," or to put it more simply, what is communication?

Communication is a vastly oversimplified (even here) philosophical realm encompassing various symbolic processes that attempt to make meaningful exchanges between people possible. John Durham Peters suggests "communication" is a historical idea that offers "a registry of modern longings" (2). A person's efforts to communicate particular meanings to another are likely just as difficult today as they have always been. Communication embodies faith in the possibilities of capturing, naming, and outwardly expressing our identity – telling others who we are. And yet, stigmatizing social consequences, such as "miscommunicating," or worse, a "failure to communicate," reveal that "communicating" with others appears to be more compromising than we anticipate. Peters writes:

> Only moderns could be facing each other and be worried about "communicating" as if they were thousands of miles apart. "Communication" is a rich tangle of intellectual and cultural strands that encodes our time's confrontations with itself. To understand communication is to understand much more. An apparent answer to the painful divisions between self and other, private and public, and inner thought and outer word, the notion illustrates our strange lives at this point in history. (Peters 2)

As stated above, communication styles and approaches commonly reflect the divisive complexities of cultural eras. Despite these tensions of inexactitude and cultural affect, people still hunger to reach outside of themselves to connect and affirm. This existential drive compels an outward reach, a transcendence of anonymous personhood into another person's receptive recognition that we share an existence as concretely relational beings who live, mean, fear, love, and someday, will die. Communication registers our desire and efforts to matter. My participants communicated their experiences of participating in collective protest as involvements in lived contingencies and existential tensions that engage their "strange lives" with others in public

demonstrations. Their existential communicative accomplishments include the contexts in which they attend collective protests. Drawing upon my interviewees' responses, I address this final question in three parts. First, I consider how these participants' descriptions disclose general existential and phenomenological facets of their personal experiences that help constitute the collective protest situation. Second, I explore the ways my interviewees discussed their protest participation as a search for commonality. Third, I discuss participating in collective protest as a form of existential communication that facilitates embodied ethical experiences of relational transcendence, emergent community, and shared concerns about the future.

The Protest Situation: Existential Callings and Ethical Attendance

As individuals we each exist as, in, and through our concrete lifeworlds. These personal realities evolve from one's embodied experiences, interpersonal negotiations, and other affective and material contingencies. The meanings of every single thing about one's self are up in the air and hover around us as we engage with the world. Existence is a self-project that involves facing our lifeworld possibilities and limitations *as a contingent being*. Existentialism recognizes ways that these experiential entanglements produce a radical singularity that *is* each person. Thus, we inhabit systems of interrelationships with the world and the other beings here and now as we navigate our potential and anxiously question our future survival. Existentialists refer to the nature of these unsteady life circumstances as one's "situation." Let us briefly consider how Husserl, Sartre, and Heidegger speak about the situation.[55] For Husserl, the situation is the *current* circumstance that defines the meaning of our present viewpoint (262). Sartre claims "the *situation*" represents the combined totality of our physical and emotional states at a given time and place, and thus, one's situation reflects the conditions of possibility in their lifeworld (Sartre,

[55] For clarity: Husserl does not capitalize "situation"; Sartre usually italicizes it, "*situation*"; and Heidegger capitalizes it, "Situation." In this work I do not punctuate the situation in any accentuated manner.

Existentialism 70). Heidegger offers the most detailed explanation of the "Situation" as a spatial signification ("to be in a situation") that potentially evolves into action, based on the relationship between one's physical location and their "resoluteness" to accomplish something (346). Heidegger details how resoluteness creates the situation:

> Far removed from any present-at-hand mixture of circumstances and accidents which we encounter, the Situation *is* only through resoluteness in it. [. . .] Resoluteness brings the Being of the "there" into the existence of the Situation. [. . .] [W]hen the call of conscience summons us to our potentiality-for-Being, it does not hold before us some empty ideal of existence, but *calls us forth into the Situation*. (346-47)

Thus, the situation here is an opening for existence; a livable space brought about by a being's willful determination and loyalty to the active integrity of their conscience (resoluteness).

The collective protester's situation, hereafter shortened to "the protest situation," encompasses my participants' descriptions about their personal journeys that motivated them to *be in* the "thereness" of their protest situations. To be clear, I acknowledge that each participant's protest experiences are phenomenologically distinct, but they do share important existential contingencies and experiential commonalities. The protest situation is a present status (the outcome: being at a protest) achieved by constructive interactive negotiations with the bounds of their basic states of existential being (self, other, embodiment, time, space, choice/freedom). My participants all shared how coping with various existential crises initially motivated them to participate in collective protest.

Moreover, my interviewees described their pursuits for a new situation. Ron explained how his disapproval of shameful political-cultural happenings compel him to make the ethical choice to embody his resistance in collective protest. K sought to express her anger and have her

voice heard by other protesters. On site, K and others in the collective transformed their stranger-statuses as unacquainted persons into a formidable familiarity. The energizing bonds of these largescale interconnections sway participants into unison, as a confluent corporeal rhythm of otherwise individual persons moves on their own negotiated accord through the streets as "one large body." Mr. Black told me how he aspires to strike an ethical balance between his morals and actions – by practicing what he preaches. His protest situation revolves around his pledge to preserve United States citizens' freedom to demonstrate their political dissent in public.

Catherine is dedicated to helping voiceless others in their fight to exist and has bonded with other like-minded members of her protest community. Catherine described her view that she inhabits a permanent protest situation. Mikhail illustrated that his protest situation aims to create seductive protest spaces. For him, such spaces intend to attract participants into them so they can experience commonality and collaborate on creating a just collective future. The protest situation discloses ways that each participant's personal ethics and resolute allegiance to others' precarious situations "*calls* [*them*] *forth into the Situation*" (Heidegger 347). My participants expressed different existential crises and cultural provocations catalyzing their activism, but their commitment to protesting embodies a common concern for others' wellbeing and freedom of existence. As such, the protest situation communicates a resolutely public response.

Who are We?: Common Grounds

The protest situation also reflects the fact that people are embedded in the world in a struggle over meanings. My participants voiced that some of their reasons for protesting involved their desire to assume control over rampant mediated misrepresentations of their protest experiences. Several of my interviewees shared their frustrations about how vulnerable protest demonstrations are to narrative hijacking and intentional mystification. Catherine remarked

about how heart-wrenching and infuriating it is to see TV coverage of her sustained activism that belittles and stereotypes her and other co-protesters as "radical," "lazy hippies" with "nothing better to do with their time." She rejected such judgments as status quo tactics to discredit environmentalists' mission to protect *all* people from being exposed to toxic pollutants. Further, Catherine voiced that she and her "family fold" fight for everyone's human rights and wellbeing. For Catherine, these tireless efforts for humanity's sake assume a universal ethical importance (shared situation). Catherine was not bitter about weathering rampant criticism slung by the media and those who privilege commercial interests over vibrant ecosystems. Rather, she said activists who steadfastly endure the targeted criticisms of corrupt institutional actors while maintaining their poise, purpose, and commitment constitute "modern-day saints." Interestingly, when Catherine and other environmentalist allies were successful in their aims, most of the people they protect had no idea they were helped. Other participants expressed similar frustrations about how collective protest demonstrations are frequently mischaracterized by uninvolved elites seeking to discredit these ethical exhibitions of shared life struggles and situations.

What can be considered "common" today? Relatedly, how do we think about ourselves and our identities? In other words, who do "we" believe "we" are? Hannah Arendt focused her 1948 book, *The Human Condition*, on describing the existential situation of "What we are doing" (5). Arendt worried that people were forgetting *to think about what they are doing* as they go about executing the routine life activities of labor, work, and action (7). Over time, these three obligatory life deeds condition people to stop putting too much thought into their doings and just see to it that they are completed (thoughtlessness). But labor, work, and action are not merely what they appear to be on the surface; they correspond with the relational engagements of *life*

(labor), *worldliness* (work), and *plurality* (action) (Arendt 7). Consequently, as each undertaking is systematically stripped of its human(e) relational meanings, "the public realm" loses its collective luster, and "the common" becomes private, secluded, and difficult to find (Arendt 50, 52). Arendt explains that "the public realm" is the visible world of appearances where citizens are "seen and heard by everybody" (50). Relatedly, "the common," in her judgment, "signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately-owned place in it" (52).

For Arendt, the human condition, or embodied experience, straddles these disparate realms ("in-between") as people experience *a choice to connect with others*, versus the shuttered alternative of private solace and alone time (Arendt 52). The problem with collapsing the existential distinctions between public and an increasingly privatized (un/)common life is that this interstitial journeying, back-and-forth through the "in-betweens," dissolves. Without this transitional, relational, and cooperative domain of activity, there are fewer opportunities to experience life with others. The "in-between" thus connects and divides two contrasting yet complementary experiential realms. The "in-between" is an experience of shifting contexts and new faces as people freely pursue relationships with others. Nevertheless, relationships are dialogic, and others may respond, indulge, or avoid this contact. The concern is the absence of a venue for the possibility of interacting, arguing politics, sharing passions, aligning, distancing, or renovating shared lifeworlds. When people lose their ability to envision a common world, there is little left to hold communities together. This conditioned human existence becomes oblivious to all the humanity it has neglected and lost. So, while assorted contemporary modes of existence may not seem to miss such common activity, for untold numbers of persons the modern experience seems somewhat lost, lonely, and miserable.

My participants described several ways that their participation in collective protest makes them feel present, connected, and impactful in ways they cannot achieve alone. Amidst the cultural vortex of collective protest, participants portrayed the importance of being together with others in shared situations that epitomize the compatibility of inclusion, civil discourse, and resistance. Collective protests form as mostly strangers put themselves together in existential and relational proximity. This collectively-embodied contiguity transforms the airy vacancies of many public spaces into common grounds populated by inspirited beings' cooperation, ethical resolve, and transcendent symbolism. What does collective protesting communicate about "who we are" as cultural beings? Participants told me their protest involvements give them a place to connect with like-minded others, voice their frustrations, feel heard, become part of something bigger and more powerful than they are, and express their affirming concern to other citizens that they care about creating and maintaining common decency and community. Collective protesters can embody auspicious interconnected journeys that refuse to succumb to some of modern life's more devastating forces, those of existential alienation and fear-mongering. Protesters can collectively address the hope(lessness), power(lessness), and/or care(lessness) of (in)activity by showing up to recover the possibilities of dedicated connectivity in this "in-between." My interviewees spoke about these intermediary thresholds as wayfaring spaces in which travel and toil encountered freedom and good humor. These people experienced their enlivened existence while heading towards some destination, somewhere between personal and public domains. Likewise, for them, participating in collective protest can bridge the damning perception of vast existential distances by demonstrating to participants and observers alike that individuals banding together can change the world. Mass protests may appear awe-inspiring from a distance, but every single being who is physically present can contribute to the relational revolution of

people passing through each other's "in-between" locales, to achieve a deliberate companionship with strangers, anchored in full public view. The result is a meaningful collective outing constituted through intentional, communicative activities.

Freedom and Responsibility: Action, Failure, and Future Concern

Collective protesting locates one's self in a vibrant multitude of humanity. This communal situation almost feels as if existence itself has wrapped its arms around "us." Members take in the ethicality of this wonderous attendance, the touching movement of thousands of feet stepping onto and into something profound. Activated beings channel a powerful charge as this ethical fusion radiates with potential. Constituents join an unfolding solidarity driven by their existential attentiveness to cultural disorder, concern, responsibility, hope, and action. This membership is not afraid to be here, and perhaps these individuals have never felt or been more present in world-building action. This realization reflects some of what I felt at the Women's March. In this final section responding to my third research question about the communicative accomplishment of collective protest, I focus on what it *means* to participate in these efforts. In other words, I rehearse the reasons my participants described about *why* they engage in collective protest. The quick answer is fairly obvious: because they all feel it is worth doing, as evidenced by the fact that they all *do it*. The more thoughtful responses involve the various ethical reasons these participants cited for their action. These interviewees are singular individuals who embody unique experiences from diverse regions of the country, as well as from differing ages and perspectives (they ranged in age from 29-67). Yet, they share similar existential callings to go protest, and when then do, they go.

Ron told me about attending large-scale protests because he wanted to help these efforts achieve a big impact. He described the importance of contributing to large protest turnouts that

result in abundant media coverage. Ron presses close to others as he becomes an "aerial dot" in protest to show the other people out there – who are not aerial dots in this company at this moment – that *this assembly is here for them to see*. It is a lighthouse of faith. There is a body of people who want to be seen by others, and it is reasonable to assume that there are myriad others who feel hopeful when they witness these vast exhibitions of togetherness. K indicated that she attends a variety of protest events and does not limit her participation to "just the things I care about." K enjoys the experience of being at a protest with other people she has never seen or met before. She told me a couple different stories about meeting people in protest situations during times when the flow of the marches was at a standstill. K's excited reflections brought to life, "the sandwich lady who didn't like Bernie but gave me a sandwich anyways." As she told me about this "sandwich lady," her voice changed and lightened a bit as she considered the importance of their interaction. K realized that she could share a sandwich with this lady "calling themselves a democrat, ha!" and not compromise a thing, which K found meaningful. K was separated from her lunch and friends by a massive crowd and the "sandwich lady" apparently planned ahead for *this very possibility*. She seemed prepared to share sandwiches with whomever she happened to get stuck with. It seemed that K appreciated the distinctive edification and vitality that protest spaces return to her. While some participants like Catherine concentrate their involvement on a specific cause, K is open to showing her support for any humane cause. K captured this moral flexibility succinctly: "Dude, I guess I just give a fuck about people." It appears that she and the "sandwich lady" have a lot in common.

Mr. Black illustrated how he exercises his freedom to demonstrate in public because he learned how dangerous this activity can be while stationed overseas. He said people cannot afford to be afraid to stand-up for the things they believe in. Mr. Black told me he is fearless and

wished other citizens could appreciate *how fundamental their right to protest is*. Mr. Black wants to be seen whether he dons camouflage or not, *to honor and preserve this space*. He clearly had worn his military fatigues before, during more dangerous and ostensibly consequential battles over freedom. It seemed that these experiences registered in him a greater appreciation for this freedom. Catherine said participating in collective protest is "a way of life" and that she identifies as an activist more than a protester. She described her *sustained involvement* in her environmentalist group in familial terms of *love and permanence*. Catherine told me that, "once they get you, you're activated for life." She also explained how being part of such dedicated collectives makes her "never want to leave." Catherine has found a community built on belonging and action, although both she and her fellow members seem to realize their fight to protect the earth will never be over.

On his part, Mikhail emphasized the importance of constructing protest spaces that are "seductive" and inviting to others. Helping people discover their commonalities and mutual loyalty is essential in attaining their commitment to build a freer utopian-anarchist future. Mikhail told me protesting is not a game; it cannot ensure peoples' "safety," and it cannot be won; *the goal is to obstruct the flow of power*. Consequently, Mikhail practices more radical collective protest methods as he stretches his and others' typical understandings of "starts" and "ends" in occupations of space and time. Mikhail explained, "people in power who don't care about other people usually care a lot about their own time and personal space, so, get in their way or whatever and help them see that they aren't really living or experiencing much." Many of Mikhail's responses about collective protest were oriented towards his plans to disrupt the present in order to build a better future. Lofty goals require concrete sacrifices, and Mikhail described his past participation as a spectrum of tactical, and at times, destructive activities. For

him, there is no time to spare because we are already here fighting an uphill battle without a moment to lose. Consequently, every single thing Mikhail does seeks to contribute to actualizing a transcendent future where people feel safe together and can return to commune-style living.

My interviewees told me that they engaged in collective protest when they realized doing nothing was no longer an option. Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "there can be no ethics outside of action" (22). What does it mean to be a human being? Existence. What concerns us? Our lives. What do we have in common? We all want to live and exist. But what ought we do? Sartre speaks to this catalyzing situation:

> Thus, we begin to catch a glimpse of the paradox of freedom: there is freedom only in a *situation*, and there is a situation only through freedom. Human-reality everywhere encounters resistance and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human-reality *is*. (*Being* 629)

No "one" is any more or less responsible and accountable for all of humanity than anyone else. We all exist and grapple with the ultimate contingency, namely the obstacle of not-existing. Therefore, as Sartre and de Beauvoir express, our very existence is an ongoing concrete and provisional project of making, building, acting, and showing ourselves to others-in-the-world.

My participants described a variety of activating cultural forces that called upon them to *do something before it is too late*. Their responsive stance asserts the fundamental human condition that we co-exist. Collective protesting affirms to us that there are other people here who care about us that we have never met. When we are in protest, we return this decent concern. Meanwhile, collective protests communicate the active presence of concerned members of humanity. Freedom and accountability, philosophical and ethical tenets of democracy, require

that citizens actively participate in their preservation and expansion. The nemesis of participation in collective protest is inaction; doing nothing. Sartre warned, "Quietism is the attitude of people who say: 'Others can do what I cannot do'" (*Existential* 36). Consequently, participating in collective protest constitutes an ethical existential engagement that communicates concern for others. We are each a totality of the actions we perform or do not; this is our situation. On its part, collective protesting imagines and explores alternative realities, and labors to realize collective change.

Implications

Having responded to my research questions, I now consider three key implications of my findings. Participating in collective protest encompasses a dynamic system of relationships. These include one's relationship with their self, with others, with government and institutional powers, and with one's contingent present placement, which simultaneously faces an unfolding future. Protesting personifies a collective reaching-out that in such efforts usually fails to achieve any concrete confirmation of closure. And yet, it is through this active doing that members potentially catch a glimpse of the shared commitments of a hopeful humanity.

The first implication of this research speaks to the constitutive capacities of this active participation. Collective protesting creates openings to other worlds. Participants travel together as they break boundaries, claim territory, and percolate the public imaginary with possibilities. These mobile thresholds reveal transcendent outlets for participants to collaborate on new ways of living together across public and private intersubjective realms of being. Protesters create contact zones that can cultivate renewed interrelationships as persons see and are seen by others doing something together. Existence tingles in fellowship.

A second implication from this work concerns the ways that collective protesting

provides a venue for people's identities to be seen and validated as integral parts of a/n (e)merging cultural membership. For instance, as individuals, we each make many of our life decisions in solitude. Many of our "personal" choices concern how we might endure the fragility, restlessness, and vulnerability of our lives, which seem increasingly compartmentalized and separate(d) from those of the other beings-in-the-world. Participants in collective protest transcend the independent "I" of individualism to become a concerned fellow representative of "us." For example, while in protest, my experience of myself as Shelley, the person, can transform into my experience of dedicated inclusion and belonging with others focused beyond our individuated selves on shared goals. It is no longer about "who *I* am" as the protest situation becomes about my ability to belong, participate, and see my own existence reflected back to me by physically present others. Protest involvements test and confront shared and continuing risks of being alive as these energized ethical collectives communicate an open existential invitation to anyone who wants to join. Collective protesting provides a meaningful way to renegotiate the relational, proximal, and social terms one has with humanity's other would-be strangers. These embodied connections, largely unspoken while based on co-present public action, draw *this* group of persons together in moments of communal transcendence. Under these conditions, arising from individuals' conscious choices to join, the ease with which people assume a powerful capacity of togetherness reminds each being that no one has to face this world alone.

A third implication this dissertation brings to light pertains to civic interrelationships among anxiety and accountability, and fear and responsibility. Participating in collective protest embodies a pulse of citizenry as people realize their obligations to become and stay involved in realizing and protecting *everyone's* freedom. Protesters are many things, to be sure, but perhaps most concretely and essentially, they are arbiters of democratic freedom. The entire project of a

democracy depends on its people's active cultural participation in setting moral standards of conduct, and envisioning sustained, equitable improvements for a more just future. Collective protesters thus embody and articulate cultural boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not. Participants express the public meanings of common concerns, a will to live, a will for collective survival, and an awareness of the staggering potential and answerability of an ethically-engaged people-power. Collective protesters assume a communal ownership of the present cultural situation, even as it seeks to subvert and redefine it.

Next, I consider some limitations of this study followed by my suggestions for future exploration. Then, I conclude this dissertation.

Limitations

Any research investigation facilitates particular insights while potentially obscuring others. One of my dissertation's limitations concerns my decision not to focus (beyond providing contextual information about them) on the specific "causes" my participants protested for or against. I decided not to engage with these political particulars because I was more interested in these participants' embodied experiences of doing collective protest. A second, related limitation is the fact that many of my participants shared predominantly left-leaning political views; that is to say, most of these interviewees identified with progressive or liberal sociopolitical stances. During participant recruitment, I did reach out to several politically moderate and conservative activist groups, but I never heard back from any of these organizations about my request to interview some of their members. Finally, my focus on participants' embodied participation necessitated that I sacrifice the size of my sample for greater descriptive depth. In fact, I did interview 17 individuals for this project, but I quickly realized that I needed to limit the number of participants in order to explore and appreciate more fully the relational complexities revealed

by the in-depth narratives of five deeply involved protest participants. Thus, this study would likely be enhanced by probing more people in-depth, as well as from across the political spectrum.

Future Directions

I envision several productive future directions for this work on collective protest. First, I want to delve deeper into the personal progression of protest participation. I think it would be interesting and important to trace how given individuals' initial, sporadic protesting involvements evolve over time into sustained and committed community memberships. For instance, how do one's relationally embodied experiences of physically attending distinct protest events intensify one's dedication to a cause? Consequently, how do these activities potentially transform peoples' protester relationships into concrete communities, and what are these lifeworlds like? Corresponding with the above limitation of participants' similar political affiliations, I believe it is important to engage with protest involvements across the political spectrum, and in particular, with collective participation in conservative activist circles. Relatedly, because the conservative-leaning activist groups I contacted failed to engage with my project or even to respond to my invitation, I am curious about how their members experience, express, perform, and discuss their protesting strategies and engagements. I wonder what difference it makes to the experience of collective protest when demonstrations align more with issues championed by the conservative right compared to the liberal left. Are there comparable activities and perceptions of belonging? How do participants articulate them? Consequently, what choices and contingencies may be common to the human beings populating these seemingly disparate political realms?

I remain interested in how people engage in public activities throughout their lives. I

think it would be worthwhile to study protest participation across the life course to learn more about how people experience this agency and physical involvement as they age. My project could also be productively extended by engaging a larger sample size, perhaps with a mixed methods approach. A larger sample size might also be fruitfully investigated in interdisciplinary collaboration with colleagues from sociology, anthropology, and/or social psychology. Finally, I performed in-person interviews with three of my five seasoned participants – the other two interviews occurred over the phone. I have realized how much I valued being in my interviewees' presence as they told me about their experiences. Several layers of communication constitute live in-person interviews, which is something I have considered at length throughout this dissertation. Across my future research on this topic, I will do my best to conduct all my interviews face-to-face. And if a participant lives far away, perhaps we can arrange to do our interview over a video chat (e.g., Skype) so that I have at least minimal access to their expressive embodiment.

Conclusion

Collective protesting embodies an existential quest that may not have a destination in mind, but rather, a purpose – a fellowship seeking the comfort of experiencing solidarity and ethical resolve. Protest offers both personal and social affirmation as participants exit their private dwellings and office buildings to assemble together on the streets, in the parks and in any public spaces that democracy promises to (p)reserve for this very purpose. Protesters navigate the experience together, with neighboring heartbeats pulsing with the vitality of an intersubjectivity teeming with potential. Protests surge and recede, reemerge and stampede, as the feet of welcome strangers perform their common rhythmic stride. Meanwhile, these evolving ground formations mark their ethical territories in fleeting temporal occupations that rarely go

unnoticed. Many protest experiences nearly overwhelm the senses as the commingled somatic energies of freedom, subjugation, and untold futures churn and swirl underfoot. Existential interchanges of bodies, histories, and shared presence appear to revive interconnected private, public, and common concerns. Participating in collective protest realizes and shares in the democratic people-power of active beings who feel, actualize, and play a part in the ethical, relational, and political responsibilities that make up larger cultural life. In these conscious, dedicated efforts, existence, survival, togetherness, and action communicate collective ownership and responsible belonging.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

SIU Southern Illinois University
CARBONDALE

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE
OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION
WOODY HALL - MAIL CODE 4709
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To: L. Shelley Rawlins

From: Kimberly K. Asner-Self
Chair, Human Subjects Committee

Date: March 15, 2018

Subject: *"Protest as Existential Communication: A Phenomenology of Embodiment, Rationality, Civic Responsibility, and Cultural Performance"*

Protocol Number: 18066

The revisions to the above referenced study have been approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. This approval includes all aspects of the project. The study is determined to be exempt according to 45 CFR 46.101(b)2. This approval does not have an expiration date; however, any future modifications to your protocol must be submitted to the Committee for review and approval prior to their implementation.

Your Form A approval is enclosed.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the USDHHS Office of Human Research Protection. The Assurance number is FWA00005334.

KAS:kr

Cc: Randal Auxier

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APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE/RECRUITMENT FLYER

Are you interested in participating in research about PROTESTING?

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study:

The Experience of Collective Protesting

The Project: You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted under the direction of Shelley Rawlins, a graduate student and doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication Studies at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The purpose of this research is to understand how people involved in collective protest feel and experience protesting.

Information About Participation: This study involves one in-person (or over the phone) audio-recorded interview (45 min-1 hr) during which you'll be invited to talk about your protesting experiences as well as, how important protesting is to you. Interviews will be arranged at your convenience and will take place at a location that you are comfortable with. All interview data will remain anonymous and you will not be identified in any way throughout the course of the study.

Eligibility:

Experiential Criteria: Anyone who has participated in collective protest within the past two years.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Please Contact: Shelley Rawlins at Rawlins@siu.edu

Communication Studies
2002C Communication
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL 62901
(618) 453-2291

SIU Southern Illinois University CARBONDALE

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Lauren "Shelley" Rawlins, a graduate student and Doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication Studies at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Randall Auxier will be the faculty sponsor for this project. The purpose of this research is to understand the experience of participating in collective protest, from people who have been involved in collective protest within the past two years. In particular, I am interested in what preparing for a protest involves, as well as the experience during, and how the experience is reflected on afterwards.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in either a sit-down interview (if possible) or a phone-recorded interview and respond to questions about what it means to engage in collective protest. These interviews will be recorded and kept on my computer, to which only I have access, and it is password protected. Any identifying information will be excluded, and your name will not appear anywhere. I will retain the recordings for use in future research. An example of one of the questions: What does engaging in protest activity mean to you? The sit-down/phone interviews should take about 45 minutes to an hour.

Risks
Risks will be minimal, as you will be talking about your protest experiences, which is part of many people's lives. Risks will be minimized as your responses will be confidential, and your name will never be connected with any of your answers.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you from participating. This research may be useful in understanding more about the protest experience.

Confidentiality
To ensure your privacy, I will retain possession of the phone/interview recordings at all times. They will be kept on my personal computer, which is password protected, only used by me, and stored at my locked home. Your names and other identifying information will not be recorded or mentioned in any writing about this project (your name will not appear anywhere). In my research and analysis of these responses, your identity will be protected and pseudonyms will be used in all references to you. I will use this data (your responses) to analyze your narrations of protesting, both of what stories you tell and how you perform your stories and identities.

Voluntary
Participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Contact Information
If you have any questions about this study, please contact me (Shelley Rawlins) at 919-271-1321 or at Rawlins@siu.edu. You may also reach the faculty advisor (Dr. Randall Auxier) on this study at 618-453-1882 or at personalist61@gmail.com.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS

Participant Questions

1. Let's begin with a few background questions. What is your age? What is your occupation? What hobbies or activities do you enjoy in your free time?

2. a. What do you consider to be your primary community memberships?

2. b. What do/es this/these community mean to you?

3. How would you describe your guiding values or ethical convictions with regard to other people in your community? How about towards the world, or in general?

4. Would you tell me about some of your involvements with protesting? (Where, when, for what cause, etc.)

5. What attracts you or draws you to protesting? (What do you like about it, why do you protest? etc.)

6. Please describe to me your first protesting experience.

7. Please tell me about a time when you were protesting and it felt good.

8. Please tell me about a time when you were protesting and it felt bad or dangerous, etc.

9. a. Now I'd like you to reflect on a specific protest.

9. b. What is your experience of preparing for a/this protest? How did you prepare for this protest activity?

9. c. What do/did you consider or think about beforehand? Do you have a ritual of some sort?

9. d. How do/did you feel while protesting? Which factors most affect/ed your feelings while immersed in/this protest? (Others, geography, cause, etc.)

10. a. In general, what is your favorite thing about protesting?

10. b. What is your favorite memory of protesting?

11. After a protest has ended, what sorts of feelings do you have? What does it mean to you after a protest? (Do you reflect on it? Do you feel "better" than before you participated?)

12. a. In general, what is your personal goal when you protest?

12. b. Has there been a time when you participated in protest that was important to you? Please tell me when and where it occurred and what it was about.

13. a. In what ways do you think protesting is an important activity of participating in the world with others?

13. b. Please try to explain why this experience is worthwhile for you?

14. Please describe any regrets you have felt about your protesting activities.

15. Do you think everyone should experience protesting in their lives?

16. Have you ever had a protesting experience where you didn't feel part of something larger? If yes, please tell me about it. Why do you think it happened?

17. In your opinion, why do (some) other people misunderstand protesters and protesting?

18. Is there anything else you would like to add concerning your experience of protesting? Or are there other questions that I have not asked that you think are an important aspect of engaging in protest?

19. What questions do you have for me?

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT AGES AND INTERVIEW DATES

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Interview Date**
Catherine	29	5/17/18
K	30	7/19/18
Mikhail	mid 30s	7/13/18
Mr. Black	51	7/10/18
Ron	67	8/3/18

APPENDIX F

PERFORMANCE/TRANSCRIPTION KEY

Bold:	spoken emphasis
CAPITALIZED:	greater spoken emphasis
Italicized:	spoken quickly or with heightened emphasis
Ellipsis . . . :	an ellipsis without brackets marks a pause in speech; such as if a participant's voice trails off while speaking
Ellipsis [. . .]:	an ellipsis inside brackets marks a textual omission

APPENDIX G

LIST OF EXISTENTIAL THEMES AND MODES

CHAPTER 3: AN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF PARTICIPATING IN COLLECTIVE PROTEST: CRISIS, ACTIVATION, AND HORIZONS

Guiding Values and Community Ethics

Catherine: A Responsibility to Educate Others

K: Most People are Good

Mikhail: Counter Isolation and Search for Commonality

Mr. Black: As Long as It's Not Unethical, Illegal, or Immoral, I Don't Mind Doing It

Ron: The Golden Rule is a Good Place to Start

Theme I: Existential Crises and Activation (Ron)

Ron #1: *Times of Cultural Crisis – "He went to war and I went to college"* ("crisis")

Ron #2: *Activation – A Need and an Obligation to Protest* ("obligation")

Ron #3: *The Informal Underground Organization Was All There* ("underground org.")

Ron #4: *There's an Electricity in the Air with Like-Minded People* ("like-minded")

Ron #5: *I'm Happy to be an Aerial Dot Filling Out the Field* ("aerial dot")

Theme II: Existential Magnification: Voice, Visibility, and One Large Body (K)

K #6: *I Needed Somebody to Hear that I Was Angry* ("hear my anger")

K #7: *If You won't Listen to Me, Now You're Gonna Have to Answer Us as a Group* ("civic duty/group power")

K #8: *That Was Life or Death for Him* ("death for him")

K #9: *Having One Large Body to Fight With* ("one large body")

K #10: *They Were Rooting Us On from Five Stories Up!* ("five stories up!")

Theme III: Existential Horizons: Freedom, Showing, and Hiding (Mr. Black)

Mr. Black #11: *In some Countries You Have to Hide* ("have to hide")

Mr. Black #12: *They didn't Fear that Violence, It* Made *Them* ("didn't fear violence")

Mr. Black #13: *The Old Mob Mentality* ("mob mentality")

Mr. Black #14: *Practice What You Preach* ("practice/preach")

Mr. Black #15: *I Did It on Purpose – I Wanted Them to See Us Together* ("see us on purpose")

CHAPTER 4: AN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF PARTICIPATING IN COLLECTIVE PROTEST: RISK, SPACE, AND RELATIONAL REVOLUTIONS

Theme IV: Existential Stakes: Risk and Responsibility (Catherine)

Catherine #16: *I Dreaded It as a Kid, but the Togetherness Made Me Stay* ("kid/togetherness")

Catherine #17: *Children Should be Raised with a Sense of Social Responsibility* ("kids/social responsibility")

Catherine #18: *The People with Warm Feet Had No Idea Who She Was* ("warm feet")

Catherine #19: *You Can't Give in to that Rage Until It's Time to Get* Enraged! ("time for rage")

Catherine #20: *People Would Have* Died; *I Wasn't Afraid of the Risk, I* Was *Afraid of the Situation* ("afraid of situation")

Catherine #21: *That Family You Form Keeps You in the Fold Through Comradery, Hope, and Guilt* ("family/hope and guilt")

Catherine #22: *The Other Side of that Mob Mentality*: *Modern-Day Saints* ("modern-day saints")

Theme V: Existential Time-Space: Affective Presence, Trans/Formations, and Occupying Futures (Mikhail)

Mikhail #23: *It Didn't Transform My Worldview: Show Up and Go Home*

("transform worldview")

Mikhail #24: *Occupation: "Welcome! Come on in!"* ("occupation- welcome!")

Mikhail #25: *I Fell in Love with This Full-On Thing – I Was Obsessed with Being There*

("obsessed with being there")

Mikhail #26: *Tactical Tensions: Spectacle or Obstruction?* ("spectacle/obstruction")

Mikhail #27: *Collective Loyalty and Crossing the Line:* We *Are Not Moving from* Here

("collective loyalty/not moving")

Mikhail #28: *Anarchist Seductions and Spatial Revolution* ("anarchy/spatial revolution")

Mikhail #29: *Affect Might be Important – It's Rarely a Rational Choice*

("affect not rationality")

Mikhail #30: *Transforming Relationships and Expressing Oppositional Power: Saying "NO"*

("transform relationships/no/power")

APPENDIX H

LETTER RETURNING THE RESEARCH

Date

Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in the research for my dissertation, *Collective Protesting as Existential Communication: A Phenomenology of Risk, Responsibility, and Ethical Attendance*. Your willingness to share details about your experiences participating in collective protest helped me to better understand this richly relational experience.

Please find my dissertation attached to this email for your review. I hope you enjoy the work and please do not hesitate to contact me if you notice something that should be adjusted.

Thank you and take care,

L. Shelley Rawlins

VITA

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Dissertation Paper Title:
Collective Protesting as Existential Communication: A Phenomenology of Risk, Responsibility, and Ethical Attendance

Major Professor: Dr. Craig Gingrich-Philbrook

Publications:

Rawlins, L. Shelley. "Kellyanne Conway and Postfeminism: 'The Desert of the Real.'" *Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research*, vol. 18, 2019, pp. 61-84.

Rawlins, L. Shelley. "Poetic Existential: A Lyrical Autoethnography of Self, Others, and World." *Art Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2018, pp. 155-77.

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