FILE NAME: Public Roundtable Identities Online with Leigh Gilmore, Julie Rak & Sidonie Smith

Speaker Key:

V1   Chair

LG   Leigh Gilmore

JR   Julie Rak

SS   Sidonie Smith

[00:00:13]

V1:   Right. Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Good evening and welcome. Is everybody sitting comfortably? It's really nice of you to come and a pleasure to see you all here. This is the second event in a series called Life Online Today and Tomorrow which is put on as part of the five-year Ego Media project which is funded by the European Research Council and hosted by King's College, London. In particular the Ego Media group and the Centre for Life Writing Research. Our roundtable today is called Identities Online. And I'm really thrilled to have the speakers tonight who are a fabulous line-up of expertises covering an enormous area. I'm going to do collective introductions and then each speaker will talk for 15 minutes or so about their work, aspects of it that connect to identities online and then we'll start panel discussion and questions from the floor. Because they're all so eminent we could be here for a very long time whilst I read out their many accomplishments. But I'll try and keep it short 'cause I know you want to hear from them.

So first, delighted to introduce Leigh Gilmore in the middle. Currently a visiting scholar at Brown University, having previously been Professor of English at Ohio State University and the first holder of an endowed chair in Gender and Women's Studies at Scripps College. She's the author of 'The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony', 2001. She's published all sorts of articles on autobiography and feminist theory and some other books. But we're eagerly awaiting the new book coming from Colombia University Press's Gender and Culture series. And it will be called 'Tainted Witness: Women's Life Narrative in Neo-Liberal Times'.

Next, I'd be delighted to introduce Julie Rak who is Professor and Associate Chair of Graduate Studies in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. Julie also has a very long list of fascinating research interests and publications. Her most recent books include, this year, 2015, 'Life Among the Qallunaat' by Mini Aodla Freeman which she co-edited with Keavy Martin, that's an extraordinary account of Inuit lives in the 1940s and '50s. In 2013, she published 'Boom: Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market'. She's also publishing a book about social climbing or gender in mountaineering expedition writing and film. And for our purposes in thinking about online identities, she has a very important publication, co-edited with Anna Poletti, called 'Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online' which was published by Wisconsin University Press in 2014. And in 2009, she was co-editor with Jeremy Popkin of the

invaluable translation of Philippe Lejeune's 'On Diary', translated by Katherine Durnin from the University of Hawaii Press, 2005.

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Finally, I'd like to introduce Sidonie Smith, who is the Martha Guernsey Colby Collegiate Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She's also recently been President of the MLA, the Modern Language Association of America with over 30,000 members. Her field-changing publications are really too long a list to read out. She's published key books on autobiography, feminist theory, travel writing, post-colonial and women's writing and human rights. And her co-edited and co-authored works with Julia Watson have become absolute classics in the life writing field, particularly 'Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader' originally published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1998 but with a second, expanded edition in 2010. Sid's also become an important voice in the study of online humanities and the future of academia. And on open access in November from the University of Michigan Press will be coming 'A Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times'.

So can we have a round of applause, please, to welcome our speakers. [Applause].

LG: Thank you very much Claire and it's delightful to be here. For those of you who have been altogether since about nine o'clock this morning, we're glad you're here, we need fresh horses. So I'm just going to jump in. I'm going to talk about a contemporary US example of online witness that has travelled internationally. So if you're not already familiar with it, I hope that these remarks are sufficiently clear. This is called 'Social Media as and Witness: the case of Black Lives Matter'.

From [inaudible – 0:05:29] Square and the Occupy Movement to digital images in videos documenting the flow of migrants across Europe, social media has become central to grassroots political movements. Social media as a testimonial space, developed so rapidly that it can be easy to forget how recently it and the technologies that make it possible appeared. Facebook in 2004, Twitter 2006, the iPhone in 2007 and the launch by Apple of the AppStore in 2008. I want to explore how social media can offer dense testimonial reference and supply the historical contexts often missing from the headlines through links and hashtags. Historical movements and their specific references travel together in online witnessing.

One recent example of how online witness infuses contemporary events with critical framing and historical context is Black Lives Matter which emerged in the aftermath of Trayvon Martin's killing on February 26th 2012. Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African-American high school student was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a Neighbourhood Watch volunteer slash vigilante, who stalked Martin as he walked to a neighbourhood convenience store in Sanford, Florida to buy candy and a soda. When Zimmerman was acquitted, a wave of protest ignited nationwide through social activism on the ground and online. An online petition calling for a full investigation and the criminal prosecution... I'm sorry, I said that wrong. When Zimmerman wasn't charged, a wave of protest ignited nationwide through social activism on the ground and online. An online petition calling for a full investigation and the criminal prosecution of Zimmerman garnered 2.2 million signatures in March 2012. And the name Trayvon was Tweeted more that two million times in 30 days following the shooting. Debates about the history of legally perpetrated

and tolerated violence directed at people of colour, racial profiling and local stand-your-ground laws moved online too and sparked a national debate.

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Black Lives Matter establishes a documentary and a commemorative politics to bear adequate witness to grieving in public through their integration into the everyday practices of social network. It offsets mugshots with childhood photos and selfies of victims of police abuse. It challenges the purposeful framing of events by photo journalists with an abundance of so-called amateur digital photographs of the same events that offer different perspectives. And in the Trayvon Martin case, it posted video of his mother who called for justice and for calm. Through the feminist intersectional framing of Black Lives Matter's online witness, Trayvon Martin's mother was enabled to bear witness not only to her own loss but also to the legacy of African-American children's vulnerability and the inability of mothers to protect them during slavery.

The Trayvon Martin case exposed the legacy of racial violence, of slavery and lynching in the United States, including the lingering potency of Jim Crow laws which instituted racial segregation in all aspects of life. These were then reconfigured in the aftermath of civil rights legislation through the practice of unequal policing and the mass incarceration of men of colour. Black Lives Matter frames the killing of African-American men through this historical context of racial violence. It emphasises the vulnerability of the black body before the violence of state institutions without losing focus on the profound humanity of embodiment. Its capacity to conjure histories of racial violence urgently requires ethical witnessing of those who share and organise online. And it brings this framing online to a mass audience, confirming Lori McNeil's observation that the internet makes possible a collective scale of circulation that is simply unimaginable offline. In other words, this use of social media by Black Lives Matter connects what it means to put one's body on the line and online.

The founders of Black Lives Matter are feminist activists and community organisers of colour. Co-founder Opal Tometi explains the movement's beginnings and its intersectional commitments. I'm quoting her now, "Black Lives Matter, a project started by three black women, two of whom are queer women and one who is a Nigerian-American, has opened up the political space for new leadership and, as a result, a new movement to emerge. Black transpeople, black queer people, black immigrants, black incarcerated people and formerly incarcerated people, black millennials, black women, low-income black people and black people with disabilities are at the front, exercising a new leadership that is bold, innovative and radical."

The Black Lives Matter origins story cites the failure of the law to hold George Zimmerman accountable for killing Trayvon Martin rather than the killing itself as a catalyst, emphasising the significance of political interpretation and critique in its founding. Their movement developed as, quote, "cultural workers, artists, designers and techies offer their labour in love to expand Black Lives Matter beyond a social media hashtag. Opal, Patrisse and I created the infrastructure for this movement project, moving the hashtag from social media to the streets." Opal Tometi, another co-founder of Black Lives Matter, writing in the Huffington Post explains, "when we founded Black Lives Matter in 2013, we wanted to create a political space within and amongst our communities for activism that could stand firmly on the shoulders of movements that have

come before us such as the civil rights movement, while innovating on its strategies, practices and approaches to finally centralise the leadership of those existing at the margins of our economy and our society." Close quotes. They purposefully register the historical context of their work, both

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in what they resist and how they understand themselves to be part of the history of resistance.

Now, the history they offer differs from mainstream accounts of the movement. Tying the evolution of Black Lives Matter primarily to its responses to a series of killings of African-American men and boys by police officers, as some articles have, obscures the feminist focus on men's and women's lives. By narrowing its historicization to a presentist framing of the event, as some commentators have done, testimonial specificity is risked. Black Lives Matter is not, as its founders make clear, only about what happened but about how to frame it, how to bear witness to histories of the present and how to look at images of death, grief and protest as a form of ethical engagement. Alicia Garza, another co-founder, clarifies that such an ethics requires going beyond contemporary models of politics and include world-making, premised in the altered framing that comes from broad participation and shared leadership. As Daunasia Yancey, a Black Lives Matter organiser in Boston, underlines in response to the criticism that decentralised leadership represents a lack of leadership and political naivety, quote, "It's absolutely wrong because we do know what we're doing and we're very clear."

The feminist historicizing of Black Lives Matter counters the notion that social media best represents the present and cannot adequately bear witness to the spectres of historical violence that haunt the infliction of violence on black bodies. Because, in its feminist focus on the body, Black Lives Matter does precisely that. Makes legible and shareable a past as well as a present. That is, all those videos made by people getting their phones out of their pockets in exceedingly stressful situations, taking up the position of witness as they record violent acts in which they otherwise cannot intervene and then tapping their screens to send evidence online, are testifying to the iconic power of the mourned black body. When what is shared online carries the hashtag Black Lives Matter, these digital images and videos help to embed feminist witness within testimonial networks.

Black Lives Matter was up and running when Michael Brown, an 18-year-old recent high school graduate was shot and killed by white police officer Darren Wilson on August 9th 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri after Wilson confronted Michael Brown and a friend for jaywalking. Black Lives Matter was not only in a position to document and share unfolding events but to frame them and to organise. In contrast to the recycling of caricatures of young African-American men as thugs, Black Lives Matter intervened in the national narrative as it was being created. As with its centring of Trayvon Martin's mother as a leader of the movement to seek justice for her son, Black Lives Matter countered the stereotypes of men of colour, especially young men, as criminally dangerous and instead, in a lightning-fast online environment, were able to slow the rush to judgement about Michael Brown. Through a feminist intersectional framing, men like Michael Brown are portrayed as members of families and histories and contexts of their personal lives and communities are combined with analyses of systemic racism.

Black Lives Matter's model of civic dissent, public protest and ethical witnessing also shaped the dissemination of information about the killing of Tamir Rice, an African-American 12-year-old boy on November 22nd 2014 in Cleveland, Ohio by two white police officers. The fatal choking of Eric Garner, 43 years old, on July 17th 2014 by white police officers in Staten Island, New York. And the killing of Freddie Gray, 26 years old, on April

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12th 2015 in Baltimore, Maryland, who was dragged by police officers to a police van, handcuffed and driven around so violently that he died. All of these incidents began with the initiation of contact by police with unarmed black boys and men as part of a permissible pattern of harassment and escalated to fatal ends. The very ordinariness of this activity, the ways in which it is undertaken with impunity, in public and often in full view, also provides the opportunity to record and share it.

In the rapidly evolving online environment, Black Lives Matter fended off some early potential co-optation of itself as All Lives Matter by adding another hashtag Say Her Name to address violence against cis-gender and transwomen of colour. Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name transform the intimate and private knowledge people of colour possess about state violence into public, shared knowledge. They project outward into the public square knowledge of the pervasiveness of routine harassment and fear they experience daily. Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name build feminist activism into the testimonial network. Here, the black body resonates as part of the history of racial violence and in its circulation becomes potent through repetition as the testimonial network online hosts a citational economy of retweeting and sharing that registers value in repetition. This repetition registers the presence of the women of colour themselves who are bearing witness to bodies and consistently carries forward, as hashtag and link, their intersectional politics which are also made available through links to pedagogical materials, guides to organising and other informational sites.

The example of Black Lives Matter helps us to see how social media can carry political and historical context about current events online and how it functions with a broader testimonial network of extrajudicial and judicial spaces of judgement. How it travels with a range of media to diverse audiences. Through practices of sharing, linking, retweeting and so on, a feminist form of witness joins the testimonial network and makes possible some interesting convergences.

Concluding paragraph. Judith Butler has argued that protest requires a sense of the public square. Drawn from Roman history, the public square represents the space of politics and, quoting Butler, "for politics to take place the body must appear." In Black Lives Matter, bodies appear online in part because the public square has historically been off limits to black bodies and policed by violence. In the videos that recorded Michael Brown's body as it lay facedown in the street for four hours in the heat of an August day, the body was present and the public square took shape through the presence of technology. While we readily think of the power of bodies in protest as the massing of people in the ongoing nightly protests in Ferguson and Baltimore, the significance of the dead body witnessed and mourned for whom justice is demanded evokes histories of witnessing that stretch into the past and haunt the present. Here we confront the spectres of African-Americans lynched and whipped, raped and sold that form both the historical context of current violence and also the testimonial context of previous instances of

bearing witness to the mutilated body. Here we think of Emmett Till who in 1955 was tortured and killed at the age of 14 in Mississippi for reportedly flirting with or talking with a white woman. At his mother's insistence, the violated body of her young son was returned to Chicago and placed in an open casket. The public funeral was attended by tens of thousands and images of his body were published in newspapers and magazines circulated to black audi

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ences. The images raised a public outcry and rallied cross-racial support, brought critical attention to civil rights in Mississippi. Thus the material witness evoked by Emmett Till's mother's decision about her son's body precedes and resonates with the online witnessing Black Lives Matter practises. We also note here the potent voice of female dissent to intervene on behalf of the dead body of one's kin. Thank you.

[Applause].

JR: Wow. I'd like to say that I'd like to particularly thank the organisers of the Ego Media conference and I'm honoured to be able to speak to all of you. As Leigh said, some of you have been here since nine and a lot of you have heard me talk about the same thing just now. So what I'm going to try to do is talk about in general what my research is about because Claire said that I should do some of that. Because I have been working on issues of online life for probably 15 years, maybe longer. Which as I have said, in internet time is forever. And so that means a lot has changed since I started. So I'd like to share some of that and then read a bit of a piece that has just come out in the fabulous collection, special issue that is in the journal 'Biography', edited by John Zuern and Lori McNeil. And that's specifically about gaming and The Sims.

And before I do that, in Canada we have an equivalent hashtag movement called Idle No More for those of you who are interested in that which has a lot of similarities. When I was listening to Leigh's talk, I was struck by the fact that Idle No More is a social activist movement started by three young indigenous women who are Cree from the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, so in the centre of Canada, really. In the mid-west. And quite a bit like Black Lives Matter, these women had decided that they were going to encourage their own communities not to be idle but to stand up against the government. Especially around water rights. And then Idle No More turned into a very large and anarchic and interesting activist movement about indigenous issues of all kinds that is now putting pressure on our elected leaders in our country and creating a real debate for the first time about the thousands of missing and murdered aboriginal women in the country. So this is a case of young people of whom nothing is ever expected, doing something unbelievable through hashtag activism. So I think it probably is happening here too. And in the discussions that we have after, I'd love to hear some examples of that. 'Cause I'm interested in how the internet's being used that way.

But here I want to talk about something a little different which is games. So why am I interested in games? For one reason, more than a few of us actually play them. And so on an informal basis, I know, I'm going to ask for a very low-stakes level of participation. I realise that if you are a British person this is going to be a lot but I will... It's a very simple question which is, do any of you play online games? Or have admitted that your best friend does? Okay. Quite a lot. Anybody over the age of 40? One, two. Two.

LG: Who play games or who are just old?

JR: I refuse to answer that question since I am 50.

Audience member: If you play games [inaudible – 0:23:38].

JR: So my mother plays Candy Crush and she's 77 so... She's pretty good. So the thing that's interesting about that to me is how many people actually play online games of any kind. It's an activity that I'm going to say a lot of people engage in but don't necessarily think

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through. Who are you online when you are playing a game? What is the game of identity that you are playing? What is the community in which you are engaging or not engaging? Is it a different scenario for that online identity than it is for the other parts of your identity? I think that answering those questions actually helps us think a lot through what the internet means and what it's going to mean to us. And especially about identity.

So Claire, this is the part where I say I tend in my work to think of identity as distinct from subjectivity, partly because there is a long discourse from philosophy and other areas of critical theory about what subjectivity is. What the subject is. But identity doesn't have an easy trajectory like that. Stuart Hall, for example, is somebody who has really written a lot about identity and what it is. But one of the reasons why we don't have as clear a genealogy is because of the way John Locke talked about identity. He created a fuzzy area in his earliest work between identity as property, something that you possess, and identity as essence. Right, so consciousness. Something that you are. And that confusion has created a lot of the legacies that we see about online. Do you own your identity? You probably do if it can be stolen from you. Identity theft is an important part of that. Are you your identity? Or what is your identity attached to?

So the first contemporary use in English of the word is connected to identity cards. World War One soldiers who carried them... English ones. Who carried those before there were dogtags. So if you were shot or gassed, the person who came along could rifle through your pockets if you still had pockets and could find your card and identify you. So you literally became your card in that case. Especially if other things about you were not identifiable. And we now use that. We are our serial numbers. We are our accounts, like our internet accounts. We have our identity in other words gets stuck to things. We can think about it as sticky. And it adheres to certain kinds of practices. These are a lot harder to trace than the history of subjectivity. And it's a lot less abstract. That's why Stuart Hall was interested in it because he thought that identity also was about issues to do with race and class specifically. Because it's the material world. Things get stuck to your identity whether you like it or not. That's how racism works. That's how sexism works. That's how any of these kinds of hate discourses are perpetuated. They get stuck to you whether you like it or not and then you have to deal with those.

So I think that in my own work I really do emphasise that identity is a very important thing to think about, especially online identity. We don't tend to think that online identity is like offline identity but I think there are a lot more similarities than we like to imagine about how those things work and we've just heard an example of that. The difference would be from Leigh's presentation is about scale and speed. How many people found out about the murder of the young man? How many people found out quickly? How did the power of documentation suddenly land in the hands of people who get victimised through police

violence? So to me, those issues are very live ones. And things that I think autobiography theorists are very well-positioned to think about. 'Cause often identity in the work, especially earlier work on the internet, but it even can happen now, identity can be thought about almost as something that's self-evident. You just create it online. But all of you know how difficult it is to manage your online personae. You've all become celebrities. Andy Warhol was right. You all have 15 minutes of fame and it seems longer, doesn't it? As you try to manage all the information about you. Nobody has ever had to do this on this kind of scale before. And so that kind of management is also an important part of

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thinking about identity in the digital age. What is it? It's about speed, scale, reach. Sometimes the other issues aren't that different but those things are different.

So, I got interested in that around games. So let me talk to you a little bit about The Sims. Besides me, has anyone actually played The Sims? Oh, there's some Sims. Can you call out which Sims. Sims One, Two, Sims Making Magic? My personal favourite. Sims University. Yes?

Audience member: City.

JR: The City. You're the City. Anybody else? Please?

Audience member: [Inaudible – 0:28:50].

JR: Pardon me? You were a One and Two. Oh, you're an early. Early adopter. Nobody else here's going to admit to The Sims in the same way. Okay. Today I'm going to talk about Sims Three but I was a Sims One so I'm from the very beginning. Why am I talking about The Sims franchise? Well, in my longer work here that I'm talking about... And how much time do I have, Claire, so that I know?

V1: You're good.

JR: I'm good. Okay. In my longer work that I talk about this, The Sims is I think of as a life lab. It's a way to test what identity online can be about without knowing what the answers will be necessarily. Because everyone who has played The Sims, and even if you haven't you will know by the end, has to contend with the fact that The Sims is increasingly a sandbox game. You play The Sims not to win. You can't get to a hundred per cent life. You can't win by beating anyone else. In fact, losing, failing in The Sims, is about as much fun. There are large amounts of discussion groups and websites about how to effectively kill your Sims and how satisfying it is to actually end them. So when you think about that, the game has this ability... And it is one of the most popular internet games in the world. It still is the highest selling internet game of all-time. Can you believe that? A 174 million copies and counting. Not counting the ones your siblings might have borrowed from you without asking. So there's a lot of people who have played The Sims. And worldwide. Almost every language group. Every country. Every continent except Antarctica somebody's playing The Sims. So the popularity of the game is partly why I was interested in it. An other reason, it's thought of as a girl game by developers. And they often will be like, why does anyone want to play The Sims? It doesn't have a narrative. It doesn't have a plot. You can't shoot things. What's the point? You go to... I always thought if you had a first-person shooter and it was in The Sims environment, everybody would have to stop and cook dinner. 'Cause you get hungry. Or everybody would just have to stop and look after

the baby. That's the way The Sims works. It's more about banality, repetition. It's about ordinary life. In fact, the ordinariness of The Sims appears to be the source of its appeal.

So one of the things I wanted to find out was why is this happening? So I'm just going to read a bit from that and then think about why failing is an interesting part of The Sims. "The Sims franchise is an excellent way to test the idea that I have that the study of life doesn't have to have a text necessarily but can be a lab. The Sims creator, Will Wright, has described The Sims fittingly as a way to model ordinary life and then make it into other forms of life in a virtual world. Sims Three is a good example of this process be cause, despite its often-cited groundbreaking structure and the reverence many game de

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signers have for Will Wright personally, The Sims franchise is most often either dis paraged by so-called 'real' or hardcore gamers as not serious enough or it is credited falsely with being so popular because it's a game for girls due to its non-narrative, non-competitive features." And as I just said in the session before, The Sims actually is played by boys as much as it's played by girls. And adults play The Sims, not just children. "Grant Tavinor, for example, has complained, 'The Sims is too much about ordinary life to even be a good game or even be a proper story that maintains interest.' In my view, Tavinor is missing the point. Games do not need to be exciting or novel to succeed. Look at Angry Birds. It is not exciting. It is very successful. Making narrative may not be the point of The Sims at all. In fact, repetition and the banal might be part of the reason why it works. The process of creating, maintaining and destroying life in The Sims appears to exceed rather than fall short of the conditions which structure most gaming." And I'm in terested in it because it's about life. And this is life writing. This is the field. So that's one reason why.

So, let me talk a little more about The Sims and why it's so important. The Sims, in fact, is about living as a process. The actual experience of playing the game works against the common assumption that narrative is inherently reflexive and so it works against the as sumption that there is no life without narrative. And this is something that autobiography theorists sometimes miss. In the essay 'Life as Narrative', Jerome Bruner concludes that the act of making the life narrative has the power to structure how we see the world. That is very much like the way The Sims works. But it is not at all like Paul John Aitken's claim in 'How our Lives Become Stories' that identity is narratively constructed and so is always already storied. So there's a difference between Bruner's position and Aitken's position. Aitken argues, quote, "narrative is not merely an appropriate form for the expression of identity, it is an identity content." So he thinks that from the time we're born, we're about stories. It sounds nice, doesn't it? It sounds romantic. Except that not all internet activity is about stories. When you post something in your favourite social media site, whether that's Instagram or Tumblr or whatever, it's not necessarily narrative that you're posting. You might be posting inside of a genre of expectations. For instance, food. I had a student do a really good project about how exacting Instagram is about how you post food. You can not post bad pictures of food. They have to be good pictures of food in order for it to be a successful post. So that means, not only do you have to never eat your food because you have to take a picture of it, you have to represent your food. But you have to be good at it. But that's not narrative. You're not making a story of food. You're intervening in a dis

course. So that's... So I think Aitken's not right in terms of that you need narrative in order to have identity. I think that's not necessarily true. At least not online.

Okay. So what can we say about The Sims? What happens when people want to make stories out of it? One of the interesting things about the game for me because it is non-narrative in its elements, your character is born or you create it. And this is what I did when I made a simulation as a test. I made... Okay. So I'm going to have to tell this story again. I made two Sims inside of a family. Michel Foucault and Michael Jackson. So basically that's because I thought they'd never get along with each other. One of the surprises of the simulation is that they became friends. This would never happen in real life. But it's because Michael Jackson, in the simulation, became a reader and he read all of Michel Foucault's books and he carried them around with him and he wouldn't even carry

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his guitar with him. He would carry these books. And he would read them when he had a moment alone. There is nothing that I planned into his personality to say that he was going to do that. But somehow the algorithm decided that he would. So this is one of the things. The affordances of the game are difficult but also the algorithms of the game are not immediately predictable. So it gives a sense of openness to the play. And I think that's what's appealing to people about The Sims. Is that it's hard to do it.

So I just want to provide an example for you and I don't have any pictures for you because, frankly, I was too tired and I forgot to put them on my stick so I'll just tell you about this. Is that one of the things that a lot of the players of The Sims appear to like to do is make legacy challenges. Legacy challenges in The Sims playing environment refer not to anything inside the game but to the community in the game and its decision to make a challenge, to make something that other players have to adopt in order to do. For instance, a challenge might be have eight children in a row in 15 minutes or whatever it is. Or build this house. Or make a family exactly like your own family and run that family. That's often... That's a very common and autobiographical challenge.

The particular one I want to talk to you about today is Alice and Kev. In a Sims legacy challenge in The Sims Three, Robin Birkenshaw* challenged his community to run a Sim simulation with homeless characters. This is very hard to do in The Sims 'cause you usually need a house for them to live. And the game wants you to have jobs for The Sims. So he made a homeless Sim who was crazy but also who wanted to have intimacy even though he was insane and hated people. So he's already unable to do things. And then he has a daughter who has a good heart but who has to live with her father and he doesn't treat her well. Inadvertently the game replicated the conditions for homelessness. Particularly in the United Kingdom which is where Robin Birkenshaw* is from. And a lot of people started to follow his stories that he would write about the simulation that he would run every night about the characters. So he made a story and he made the characters believable. Even though it's hard to do in The Sims. And then he made it possible to download the characters into your own simureal*. Many of the players would do it because they'd want to save the characters from homelessness. But the point is that you can't do that. It's actually very hard to stop being homeless. And so what happened instead was a social activist component of the site developed where it became possible to go and learn more about homelessness, to donate money, to do other kinds of offline act

ivism about homelessness. And that happened even though the community wasn't geared towards that.

So one of the things that I want to have for you as a takeaway from that is not only that doing different methods for this kind of research can yield up surprising results but also that you don't need narrative in order to have identity. At least not in The Sims. But if it is created under difficult conditions, these can be compelling to communities and create other unforeseen results. Whether they're political ones or other kinds of results. So, maybe it isn't true that our lives are always already storied but it is true that storymaking under difficult conditions can be what online environments have to offer all kinds of creators whether they're young or old, wherever they live, whatever they are doing. If they have a computer and they have some access to a little bit of internet, it is pretty amazing what some of them can create. Thank you.

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[Applause].

SS: Thank you everyone. Can everybody hear okay? Up there in the back, is that good? Okay. Just let me know if I... I'm beginning to flag and so I'm trying to keep my energy at a high level. Thank you Max, Claire. Thank you, dears, for your papers. I'm going to shift the focus a little bit and I'm going to be thinking about online professional identities and the technologised aspects of professional identities of academic humanists. And I'm going to do this because I've just finished this book called 'Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times'. It will be out in an open access version, we hope, at the beginning of November. Then out in a book from after the first of the year. And it's a book in which I try and think of... or I make the case... I try and make the case in a very passionate way about how we need a doctoral education in the humanities that is not a 20th century education but a 21st century education. And so part of the book is focused on the nitty-gritty of doctoral education, including the components of it and most prominently the dissertation. Part of it is about the conditions, economic, political, institutional, corporatised conditions of the academy today. And the problems that academic humanists have. And the middle part, the longest part, really, is about the new life of the academy and the way in which changes in the academy are asking for us to imagine this new ecology and who we will be as academic humanists in that academy. So there's a chapter on the distributed university, the new ecology of knowledge, the new media and modes of scholarly communication, the project of going open, open access, the way we teach now and then I have a small piece on the possibly post-human humanities scholar. And that's what I'm going to present to you today.

Okay. One of the final observations I made when I talk about the shifting environment in which the humanists will go about their everyday lives in the next decades is this brief one offered in a speculative mode. It has to do with the agent of knowing. The scholar-teacher. What kind of scholarly subjects will humanists be? How might they think of themselves productively as post-human? In what sense and to what end? It is not the place, I say in this book, to really parse the several strands of contemporary theorising of the post-humans. That can be found elsewhere. But what I can do is offer an impressionistic portrait of the possibly post-human humanities scholar.

For one take on the possibly post-human humanist, I can go to William J Mitchell and his 2000 book, 'Me Plus Plus: the Cyborg Self and the Networked City'. I read Mitchell's 'Me

ivism about homelessness. And that happened even though the community wasn't geared towards that.

So one of the things that I want to have for you as a takeaway from that is not only that doing different methods for this kind of research can yield up surprising results but also that you don't need narrative in order to have identity. At least not in The Sims. But if it is created under difficult conditions, these can be compelling to communities and create other unforeseen results. Whether they're political ones or other kinds of results. So, maybe it isn't true that our lives are always already storied but it is true that storymaking under difficult conditions can be what online environments have to offer all kinds of creators whether they're young or old, wherever they live, whatever they are doing. If they have a computer and they have some access to a little bit of internet, it is pretty amazing what some of them can create. Thank you.

[00:39:40]

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Plus Plus' as a kind of autobiographical manifesto of what he calls the 'electronomadic cyborg'. And a riff on Donna Haraway's 'Cyborg Politics'. He writes, "I am plugged into other objects and subjects in such a way that I become myself in and through them, even as they become themselves in and through me." End quote. No isolated singularity. No autonomous individuality of the enlightenment subject or humanist man. His maxim and model for the Me Plus Plus is counter-Cartersian. I link therefore I am. Mitchell's Me Plus Plus subject is at once custom-designed via enhanced in-body capabilities and radically extended, via technological devices and digital networks. Or to put it in other words, that subject is a prosthetically-extended conjunction of carbon and silicone. This is the techno logised concept of post-human. Outfitted in a kind of feminist ethic of relationality. I'm not going there... quite going there with him in what I'm trying to convey about the importance of attending to the kinds of subjects academic humanists are becoming in this knowledge ecology. Riffing on Mitchell's subject as a composite of fleshware, hardware and soft

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ware, strong along the electric currents of networks, I want to propose the new scholar subject as a performative of passionate singularlity, hybrid materiality and networked rela tionality. This is one sense in which the humanity scholars to be is possibly post-human ist and a post-humanist scholar.

But there is more to consider of the scholar-subject presumed to be the locus of thinking. What exactly is doing the thinking now? As successive generations of computer devices and their algorithmic codes are built, those devices come, as Daniel Atkins observes, to seem natural. Some are integrated physically into human bodies. This hybrid materiality involves not only device and human but device, human and networked cyber infrastruc ture. If Atkins writes on the sanguine side of technologised subjectivity, Siva Vaidhy ananthan is less sanguine about the human device interface that is becoming the embodied self. Writing on the occasion on the death of Steve Jobs, he observed, "we now view computers as prostheses to our bodies albeit prostheses as dazzling as amulets. We touch devices directly with our oily skin. We manipulate data and images as if there were not lens between them and us. We are embedded in a lattice of devices and digital radio signals. And those devices and signals are embedded in us." End quote. Now, whether one is sanguine or not in assessing the naturalised technologically hybrid sub ject, the implications of this state of being human for the humanist scholar, whose coin is reading, interpretation, critique and story-telling, are profound. The locus of thinking for the prosthetically-extendable scholar, joined along the currents of networked relationality, is an ensemble affair. It involves the scholar, the device, the algorithm, the code. It in volves the design architecture of platform and tool, the experiential architecture of net works and the economy of energy. It involves the cloud, the crowd and the rooms, brick and mortar and virtual in which scholarly thinking moves forward.

David Weinberger's witty title for his book on the emergent knowledge ecology captures the complexities and perplexities of the scholar's life that is becoming. This is his title: 'Too Big to Know: Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren't the Facts, Experts Are Everywhere and the Smartest Person in the Room is the Room'. Ultimately, thinking is a collaborative affair of multiple actors, human and non-human, virtual and material, el egantly orderly and unruly. Jane Bennett in her project to give the force of things more due would call this distributed composite notion of agency and agency of assemblages. This concept of agency is post-human in the sense that it dislodges the human subject as

the entire site of rationality, autonomy, intentionality and effectivity and joins the human subject to the, quote, "material agency of non- or not-quite things."

Through this discussion of the possibly post-human humanist, I'm making the point that it's critical to complicate the understanding of how humanists do the work of the humanit ies. Yes, the mode of doing humanities scholarship in the academy has commonly been described as that of the isolated scholar, producing a long form argument in the shape of a book. And faculty needs have commonly been described as individual study, computer screen, archive and time. In this time, however, possibly post-human humanities scholars will accumulate new skills, including that of algorithmic literacy. Not only learning how to interpret results but to understand the whole cooking process of algorithm development, as Dean Rehberger observes. There will be, at once, multi-mediated self-presenters, self-archivers, bricklayers* of intellectual inquiry, individual and collective. They will be an onymised databases, network nodes of a knowledge collabratory involving scholars, stu

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dents, lay people, smart objects and robots. Network scholars will not only be connected to knowledge communities close at hand, in the room, so to speak, but also connected across the globe in an interlinked ecology of scholarly practices and knowledge econom ies. The scholarly environment is thus an assemblage of human and non-human agents, ever mobile, forming and reforming, expanding in number and complexity and contract ing. Travelling along one itinerary and then another. Purposeful and unpredictable. And the work of the humanities scholar becomes perhaps that of Donna Haraway's witness. An interpretative, engaged, contingent, fallible engagement, never a disengaged account. Or it perhaps becomes that of Rosi Braidotti's process ontology, a role for the intellectual which consists not in leading the opinions, the doxa, legislating the truth, the dogma, or administering the protocols of intellectual life, but rather in creating and disseminating new concepts and ideas. The stakes here remain high for, as my colleague, Leela Fernandes cautions, "knowledge does not simply represent reality, it also makes reality." In other words, knowledge, literally, matters.

But even as the ethics of scholarly enquiry are rethought along these post-humanist lines it is necessary to recognise the less salutary aspects of algorithmic transformation of the humanities scholar. For that is another dimension of the possibly post-humanist scholar-subject. That subject is already captured in the big quantification engine of higher educa tion. This dataisation of the humanities scholar is at once a given and troubling to contem plate. Just as current trends in self-quantification are sometimes amusing, sometime dis quieting. North American institutions have embraced the mantra of assessment and qual ity outcomes. A mantra extending across all the domains of higher education. Humanists are enjoined to use models of quantitative assessment of scholarly productivity as col leagues in the sciences and social sciences have long done with their citation indexes. Google Scholar has already become a kind of vanity mirror of citations for humanists. If, that is, the name is sufficiently unique and one has few Google gangers. Those are people with your same name. But the mirror on the virtual wall is not just for vanity. It is for professional survival and advancement. The quantified scholar-subject is constantly asked to produce data on scholarly impact and to produce running commentary or metadata on how that data should be interpreted by colleagues and external evaluators. Just as the quantified self movement awaits the next device of self-monitoring, soon hu

manists might see a citation device embedded in the wrist of the humanities scholars with its own scrolling readout of real-time citations. A printout of intellectual passions distrib uted through reading publics. Indeed, technology might be found at fingertips in the apps for smartphones such as Evernote, Office Drop, Notebook, Scrivener and so on.

And now the scholar-subject is assuming another task. Producing oneself as data on an nual activities forms. These data-driven forms are the online forms colleges and universit ies are using to track faculty activities for the purposes of mining data regarding teaching, service and research. Such data-driven forms are overriding faculty and departmental un derstandings of value. They are turning faculty into form fillers with often frustrating res ults with regard to time and energy. And they are extensions of efficiency measures that allocate staff to share service centres and transform scholar-subjects into accountants of activity. And for this, faculty have to once again critique that accountancy and pressure administrators to ensure ease of use, flexibility and a kind of attention to the values that the forms reproduce and inscribe.

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Whether humanities faculty think of themselves as post-human scholars, in utopian or dystopian mode, or as some kind of hybrid witness avidly going about the work of the hu manities in the world or whether they understand themselves as humanist in the trans ition of uncertainties, they face daunting questions. What will their scholarly and teaching projects look like? How will they do their work? What energising infrastructures will they depend upon? What set of skills will they need to do work? How will their work be com municated? Who will their audiences be? How will it be funded? Who will own their work? What will its impact be? How will it be evaluated? How will ecologies and networks of knowledge emerge differently in the future? How will they imagine a career in the outside of the academy? The questions go on and on.

To be sure, old habits of doing scholarship and old scholarly subjectivities will certainly persist. But new habits are now mobilised and new scholarly subjectivities emerge. How those habits and subjectivities will evolve in the midst of future technologies and cultures of sociality can only be dimly glimpsed. That is the distinctive work of the humanities in the world. That is the lens scholars must turn on themselves. Doctoral students, faculty and administrators alike. And I'll stop there.

[Applause].

V1:   Thank you very much. I'd like the chair's privilege of just asking one question. The first question. I had a conversation last week with a systems forecaster for Unilever who said to me that people think of algorithms as a string of abstract numbers. But actually there is a human input in shaping them which, of course, is invisible and beyond certainly my reach of mathematical competence and understanding. But in different ways, algorithms came up explicitly in two papers and perhaps implicitly in Leigh's work about mass circu lation and momentum. And I wondered if you could just reflect a little bit more on how we might, as it were, know more about the algorithmic affordances that are working upon us, with us and possibly against us.

SS: Do you want to start on that?

JR: Sure. I can try. This is hard because I think the reason why algorithms operate the way that they do is because of their invisibility but also because they're elite formations.

They're actually hard to program. And I think... And it's a very specialised skill that re quires you to be able to do the kinds of statistical work that enable algorithms to operate. One of the things I think that would be interesting to do is, I think that people who are in terested in this area need to collaborate with people working on AI. Because I think that artificial intelligence is the place where algorithms are being tested and twisted around and thought through. I don't actually think that I care much about the corporate use 'cause I know what they want. They want my money. They want my body to give them money. That's what they need. But I think that artificial intelligence work which is becom ing extremely important in the public realm and which has a lot of ethical questions at tached to it, that if I were going to be doing work on specifically on making algorithms vis ible and thinking through how choice operates with algorithms, that I'd go to AI people and collaborate with them. Because years ago I did some work with some AI people who told me that computers can't actually lie. Human beings can lie. But to lie means that a computer has to choose option one and then decide not to choose it but to choose option two. But for reasons that are not logical reasons and they can't do it at random. In order

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to work. And so if you can't make a computer lie, you can't replicate the human mind. And in that sense that is one reason why I think algorithms at this stage are so imperfect. Everyone has had the experience of being on social media and having the wrong choices directed to them. Am I correct on that? For instance, not to be too rude or anything but I am pretty much the last person who needs to learn about penis enlargements. And yet these things are directed at me. And they're directed at me because algorithms are not perfect replications of the human mind at this point. So to me, I'd want to know more about why they're not and what we can do about it. I hope that helps the conversation.

SS: A couple of things to say on that. One is I have colleagues at the University of Michigan who are in media studies, communication studies and American culture who are working on the cultures of the algorithm. I've colleagues who are interested in the gendered and racialised histories of algorithms. So part of what the project is is for humanists to be do ing work on the cultural studies of algorithms. The other part... This comes from a piece... a book that Sherry Turkle wrote, the other part is that humanists have to demand a place at the table when there's discussions about issues around coding, issues around systems architecture. And that is instead of not... They don't have to become experts in it but they have to be at the table to ask the questions about the framing of the issues that the al gorithm is trying to deliver. So those are two aspects of it. And that asks us to be very act ive in... not trying to become coders or understand or claim algorithmic numeracy but to be engaged in the kind of work that our colleagues... learning through the work our col leagues are doing on the algorithm and then taking the time to insist that humanities fac ulty are part of the larger conversation.

V1:   Right. Questions. Rebecca.

Audience member: Thanks for three great papers. My question was actually for Julie. At times... And it feeds into the prior discussion but at times in your paper I was seeing a slight slippage between narrative and... in a positive way... narrative and prediction.

JR: Yes.

Audience member: And so I was... given we're in the age of predictive text and Google search prediction, etc. I was wondering if you could tease out some of the implica tions you might see in The Sims. Maybe in the popularity of The Sims as this sort of unpredictable scenario or in relation to algorithms. I just thought that you probably had some very interesting things to say about it that I wanted to hear.

JR: I'll try my best but it is some... I don't even know what time it is at home. But I will. You're right to point this out. So just to let the public audience know, one of the reasons why I talked about narrative the way that I did to do with gaming is that gaming doesn't... There are problems with researching gaming. Everyone who knows... who's in gaming research knows what these problems are. But in case you're not, games are not texts sometimes. So they're also experiences. So they're played differently by different people. A very good example of that would be there's a really very funny video you can find on YouTube which is a really well-known drag queen and her nephews have given her Grand Theft Auto to play. And she's never played Grand Theft Auto. She doesn't play games anyway and she decides to play it and it's a record of what she decides to do which is that she decides

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she doesn't want to shoot anyone, she just wants to wear fabulous outfits and fight people or whatever. She does things that the game says you're not supposed to do. So that's part of the... So the problem with narrative in that the way that it's understood, for example, in literary studies or even in narratology is that the structures required to look at what narratives are don't always exist in gaming. They don't always exist in other kinds of online formations either. But it doesn't always answer the questions you might have. So, for instance, if I ever have to teach gaming, the problem with teaching gaming is you can't just say this is how a game works. Because you actually have to have... not only do you have to have an understanding of the affordances that are limiting and making possible your activity, you're also... every user is slightly different. Any game if it's any good is go ing to have different relation. Also experience is a form of knowledge that is not immedi ately teachable or transmittable by me. I'm not the source of knowledge about a game ne cessarily. I'm not the only one and I shouldn't be. There's also the industrial history of the game. So there's a whole bunch of things that don't really make it possible to teach a game like a text. So that was one thing that I thought about.

Next thing I thought about was in my training there is a collapse between narrative as a process of making a story and a narrative which is a finished product. So very often you'll hear people say, and in this narrative the following thing happens. Well, everyone knows that if you were talking about poetry, you cannot talk about narrative necessarily. Unless there's a story being told in a poem. You can't. Poetry is operating discursively very differ ently. The same thing happens with games. So I wanted to drive a critical wedge there. You're quite right that I do make a homology, which I should probably think about some more 'cause I think you're right, between predictability and narrative. However I do think that in the sense that narratologists often discuss narrative that predictability is part of narrative. It's just some things look more predictable than others. Algorithmically, for in stance, the way algorithms are supposed to work is they're supposed to act like they're human. So that what that means is that there's an accretion of enough data so that it looks like a human decision has been made for you. You'll like this on the basis of these other things What often feels limiting is that human choice and, in fact, human thinking is

so networked. It's much more networked than a computer is. At least right now. Maybe in ten years it won't be true. So to me, I think that's one of the reasons why I made the ho mology the way that I did. But I have to say, there's more than one kind of narrative pos sibility. And I think that kind of opening up of what those things is what I want to get at when we're thinking about interfaces like games. I don't know. So, hopefully that's the be ginning of an answer. But I take your point and I think I should be more exact when I think about it.

Audience member: Thank you all for those wide-ranging and provocative papers. They were ter rific. I'd like to address my question to Leigh. And without going into a lot of detail because it's a very American example recently, Leigh, I wondered if there was, in a sense, a negative of what you were discussing or a limit case, perhaps more precisely, in the case of the Sandra Blaine...

LG: Bland.

[01:08:04]

Audience member: Sorry, yes, Bland... situation in which this was a woman not a man. She was not murdered but committed suicide in a jail cell after being arrested for what, I believe, is a non-offence. And, of course, nobody could be displayed. So it made me start to think about, is there a sense in which this thinking about social media as a kind of witness is in some ways perhaps a utopian construction at a moment of the continuation, obviously, of racial injustice to the point of imprisonment, persecution and murder?

LG: Thank you. I think I might be doing something with tone that might be a little bit similar to what you're doing which is to try to talk about openings and possibilities within what is otherwise a really bleak situation. So that my question here is to test how can social me dia present online witnessing. How can it slow down the rapid judgement that the talking heads news cycle falls for. And my sense is that it does it through the formation of some thing like Say Her Name, Black Lives Matter that are already lodged in the testimonial network. So that they're there waiting to tag that stuff and then they have a way of looking at it. I think one of... I think the Sandra Bland case is really interesting and I'm going to talk about her tomorrow.

Audience member: Oh, sorry.

LG: No, no, no. Which is to say, she's already an activist. We already have... We have... So she... Sandra Bland is a young African-American woman who was heading off to Texas to her alma mater to take a new job. This was a really positive new step for her in her life and she was excited about it. We have a selfie of her in her car when she's heading off on her drive. What we can tell happened next is that very close to the campus gates where she was going, a police officer, a police car was pulling up behind her really fast and she changed lanes to get out of the way. He then pulled her over for failing to signal for making a lane change. So there's a sort of non-thing that happened. And what you be gin to understand is that the revenue of that small town was largely by those kinds of routine traffic stops. The documentation... the study after Ferguson discovered that there was a pattern of police activity that was targeting African-Americans with minor offences

and then rewarding officers for making multiple citations. So that people would walk out of a non-moment, a suspicious pull-over and walk out of there cited for expired driver's licence, broken taillight, on and on. So that they would walk out with 700 dollars, 500 dollars, 200 dollars of debt which was too much. And then they would miss the payment and then heavy fines would accrue. And so it's a practice. It's a legal, permissible practice of harassment. She was pulled over and there's a dashboard camera so it records the acceleration of his contact with her. Which is to say give me your licence. She provides it. She's smoking a cigarette. He asks about her mood. And she's policed into commenting upon her mood. And she says, yes, I'm not having a very good day. And it escalates from there. He tells her to put out her cigarette. Smoking a cigarette during a traffic stop isn't illegal in any state in the nation in the US. And it goes from there really rapidly to him saying I'm going to light you up and pulling his Taser at her face. He hauls her out of the car. He throws her on the ground. And she narrates what he's doing to her. So she bears witness to the criminal activity and she names it in an ongoing way as this is occurring. And then what we find out is that she's held. She's able to contact her sister and then she's a jailhouse suicide, allegedly.

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So in what ways can Sandra Bland bear witness to the crime that's committed against her? And my sense is that she was doing everything she could. She was bearing witness to a crime that was taking place against her. She said you're pulling back my arm. You have your knees in my back. You're hurting me. Don't you care? And she continued to name that. And it makes the suicide difficult to read. It makes it unintelligible.

And so my sense when we talk about tomorrow is that there's a way in which Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name are not the only feminist witnesses that are placed now within a testimonial network, in which all of this, all of these acts are circulating. But there's an older witness whenever sovereignty and dissent and gender are at play. And that's Antigone who also has an illegible jailhouse suicide, in a way. And so it's the figure of Sandra Bland as an Antigone that I think is emerging as a very important kind of witness.

And I would say that that's also the form of witness that Bree Newsome represented, who was a young African-American woman who, following the church mass killing by the young white racists in South Carolina and the quick discussion about taking down the Confederate flag that flies over that capital, she climbed the flagpole and took the flag down, chanting the 23rd Psalm as she came down. And they said, you're going to come down and you're going to be arrested. She said, I am aware. And presented herself for arrest. She was naming her action as it was ongoing. And it seems to me that these are figures that present the same kinds of possibilities that have compelled scholars about Antigone to think about. Antigone the character, Antigone the play and Antigone with a performance history of resistance. An important context. So that's a longish answer. But I think she is in a testimonial network. I grieve her loss and I think she stands as a witness.

Audience member: Hi. Yes, thanks to all the panellists and my question's for Leigh as well. When you were talking about bearing witness to the present, I was thinking about how I've been seeing on Twitter and Tumblr, young people of colour using those sites to express fear about future in the exact terms of Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name. So, I don't want to become a hashtag, for instance. Or on profile pictures, drawing attention to the fact that they could

be used against them by television networks and that kind of thing. And it struck me that they're expressing how they feel but they're also taking ad vantage of the longevity of the medium and the fact that they're almost bear ing witness before the fact, if you see what I mean. And trying to project their ability to control the narrative of their lives into an uncertain future. And I wanted to ask how you think that plays into the testimonial network?

LG: I think that's a really good question and I haven't really worked on that or thought about that at any length. But I think that one of the things that's happening with that is that there's a real fusion of their everyday uses of an online life where you might do any num ber of things that are then seamlessly transitioning into making a kind of political state ment. And so what I see in there is a kind of interweaving of the political... of giving a kind of political voice with a newly-available discourse around it for adolescents. And so I think that there's something really specific about adolescents online and youth online and how youth are using different media and propelling it forward and how they're being targeted and marketed to in really aggressive ways . But there's something there that's happening with making out of something that's available. And I just think you're really onto some

[01:17:10]

thing that's important. And I do think that there's a kind of potential... There's a way of speaking out of fear and anxiety but turning that into the public square and claiming that as public knowledge that I think is really important.

[Pause].

V1:   I have a question which might connect things which has to do with affect. Again, hovering around all the papers was utopian, dystopian, walking a very fine line about how we can make things better, how we can make the best of what we have and in what ways oppor tunities for feelings are changed by online practices and possibilities. So, could I ask you very generally to say something or very specifically to say something about in what ways you see your subject being changed by digital forms having different affects or different possibilities about things?

JR: And they look at me.

LG: I can say something short first.

JR: Do something short.

LG: I can go first. One of the things I would say is that there's a conscious use in Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name with balancing aversion and doubt and discrediting that's deeply, deeply woven into the American response to the vulnerability of the black body. And that what's woven into there is historically so deep that the aversions of white culture are always running out ahead of any kind of resistance. And so there is an affect man agement project going on of rehumanising people. And so I do think that that's really im portant. So there's a conventional link in US media that connects any time people of col our are involved in a crisis and anything gets broken with looting. So this is the ten-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. And one of the ways that images were presented in that crisis was that... It was a failure of the levies and when the city flooded there was no elec tricity, there was no drinking water. And when people of colour took bottled water in a lifesaving act to survive, it was portrayed as looting. So it's really important to break is the naturalisation of affect which comes through the repetition of association of negative acts

and judgements directed at people. And so that is a form of producing affect. And part of the protest is to supply alternative images. To supply alternative framing. And to look at the neighbourhoods in which white residents of New Orleans were also taking bottled water out of stores that had broken glass in the storefront. So it's managing affect through recontextualising the image production that leads to just the repetition of certain kinds of judgements and their capacity to take hold as truth.

V1:   Can I just tag a comment on which is I don't know if you've seen the...

SS: You have to speak up.

V1:   Sorry. There's been little research on the export, as it were, of Black Lives Matter into other campaigns. So very interesting practices of, for instance, Palestinians in Ramallah, refugee camps, holding up placards saying Black Lives Matter. Taking selfies and then putting it out there. So it's a really nice fill-in for that. Thank you. So, Sid.

SS: Leigh's always a hard act to follow. But I do have something to say about affect and the scholar and affect. And the difficulty... in part the difficulty of this transitional moment in the academy. And the sense that people... And, again, I'm particularly interested in

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people in the academic humanities. The different way in which they're going to experience their relationship with their work. And the relationship with scholarly activity itself. And what it means to do it. And what it means to have ownership of it. Because there are all these changes going on and there's anxiety, there's a sense of... there can be a sense of kind of shame about knowing the changes are going on but not being able to imagine oneself in this new... I don't want to call it new. In this transforming environment. And I'm thinking about the ways in which people are struggling to understand... And this is a strange connection to affect but are struggling to understand what making one's work open access... what that means for the sense of how to... being asked to let one's work go into a system that is a value system that seems to be alien and distressing in a way. Because we're used to thinking about ownership of our own work, about producing it in an isolated environment and then having it published in book form and that being the affective attachment we have to that one form, powerful form, of scholarly communication. So that's why I hear my colleagues talk nostalgically about the desire for an earlier time, about a threat to the humanities. And all of that is about the affect that's attached to how it is we think of ourselves as being scholars and doing scholarship and publishing it and circulating it.

Audience member: If I may... You actually answered partially my question which I have. So, we have a good idea now what the post-human humanities scholar will be like. How about the post-human doctoral candidate? Will there still be a doctoral thesis? Do we need a doctorate degree at all? Or teamwork. What it will look like according to what you have written?

SS: Absolutely we need doctoral studies. But in terms of thinking about a 21st century doctoral education, for me, the idea of the singular project, long form, is a... I'm going to say something. I don't quite believe it but it's to be dramatic. It's a deadend. It's a form that's tied to the 20th century. Actually it goes back to the 18th, 19th century, actually. 19th century. And what we need is a concept of a final project that the student has much more... has a greater contribution in imagining what it could be and how different media and modes of

pursuing that as the product, at the end of that process. What are the alternatives to the proto-monograph dissertation? And for me, what's critical about this is that I think that the changes in how we confer... My foot is stuck on something. [Laughter]. I can't get it off my shoe. Sorry. I felt... That was a critique coming from under the table. For me, there are two things that are critical about rethinking doctoral education. To address two major is sues. Now, I'm talking about in the US and North America. So this may or may not have anything to do here. But the humanities is unable to attract diverse enough cohorts of doctoral students. And we will be irrelevant if we aren't a more diverse faculty. That's just it. Our work will be less relevant and we will be bereft of all the different questions that can come to the table to make our work the best it can be. And the second is... And this is a condition in the US that's a radical condition and that is the casualisation of the labour force in the academy and the woeful treatment of the non-tenure track faculty in terms of salaries, working conditions and contractual arrangements. And the thing about imagining a more capacious set of possibilities for a final project and thinking about the ways in which doctoral students need all kinds... need to be thinking about different ways in which scholarly work is done, that also is tied to thinking about alternative futures. That is that there's not one measure of success. Getting the position that your doctoral mentor has at

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one of the major universities. That that's a... What do I want to say? I'm sorry. I'm tired and I can't get the... It's a...Sorry. I'll just stop the sentence. Anyway, it's a thing of the past. It's a thing of the past. And my purpose in calling for this... it is a kind of radical re thinking of the doctorate, is that to the degree we encourage students to see success in multiple futures. There will never be too many people with PhDs in the world. I believe that. The training is powerful. The training is needed everywhere. And so... But there are multiple careers available to students. And to the degree they imagine themselves as succeeding in alternative fields and as having produced this thing that's not to replicate the norms of a former time but to struggle towards conceptualising a project that is mean ingful to them, that thinks about the form in relationship to the intellectual questions they're asking, that we will have fewer people who are lingering on to finish degrees and having to teach in these contingent positions. So, for me, these changes have to do with addressing some of the very difficult, thorny and very troubling aspects of doctoral educa tion in the humanities in the States. I'm sorry I went on.

V1:   No. I'm going to call a close there because I can see our speakers are tired. You've well earned a drink. And it's been fantastic and very, very inspiring. And so please can we thank them and then all go next door to have some refreshment and revive our spirits and ask some more questions there. Thank you all very, very much indeed.

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