The 1992 Los Angeles Riots Memorial

The case for qualitative data in memorializing tragic events

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Abstract

In memorializing the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, the question of authenticity in data and information is at the forefront of whether the memorial fulfills its purpose. This leads to the question of what is its purpose and whether it can be visualized appropriately. The telling of the personal stories of those who died is a start to a subjective perspective of the events that occurred as recorded by the Los Angeles Times during the riots. The importance of subjectivity is highlighted through a theory-grounded hypothesis method of conducting a research study for under-represented groups of participants like those involved in the Los Angeles Riots. This thesis further explores the importance of qualitative data and how it is used by the media, and subsequently how it is used in measuring tragedies. Making a case for qualitative data in this specific event, this thesis also touches on the procedure of memorializing recent events given the overabundance of data in today's day and age compared to that of 1992.

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Introduction: Personal Stories

An oblivious four-year old Korean-American child emerged with his eight-year old brother, who was slightly more aware that something had not been right over the past few days. The four-year old just wanted Flamin' Hot Lays from his local neighborhood grocery store, Jay's Market, where he always got his chips and the occasional tamale with his chore allowance he earned throughout the week. As he turned the corner and stood in the parking lot of Jay's Market on Pico and 6th Avenue, he noticed it was unusually quiet and empty. The windows looked dark and there didn't seem to be any activity inside. Confused, he approached the store before noticing that the corner of the building was charred. Looking closer, shelving units were toppled over and trampled goods carpeted the floor. The only thought he had was, "Damn, where am I going to get my Flamin' Hot Lays?" because in his mind, the grocery store was just closed after an unfortunate fire.

And so he went to the liquor store, which was open and untouched. He later learned in his adult years that his father, with a rifle in hand, had been on the roof of that liquor store that was owned by his friend, and guarding it alongside a hired gang patrolling the store for the past few days. It was also later that he learned the magnitude of the riots that had happened just outside of his family's apartment. It was May 3, 1992 in Los Angeles, California -- the first relatively safe day since the beginning of the chaos on April 29, 1992.

The Los Angeles Riots of 1992 were widespread in a sprawling city and county. The chaos spilled into the San Bernardino Valley up north, all the way to the city of Long Beach on the southern border of the LA county limit. In such a sprawled city, the experiences of the people who found themselves in the midst of the chaos are largely lost records with an interview here and there from a media source to get a perspective. Some people were shot to death by law enforcement officers, while some were murdered for the color of their skin, or simply caught in the crossfire. In some ways, this was the everyday experience for some living in or near South Central Los Angeles, but it was definitely much more heightened in those five days.

That same everyday experience built on top of the tension that was built the day before that, and a series of tragic events that were generally kept within the confines of local news. The Korean-American community chasing the American Dream had popped up businesses in what would be called Koreatown and its surrounding areas, which included a heavily African-American population in South Central Los Angeles. Mexican immigrants were hired to work for minimum wage in these businesses, and all the while these groups of immigrants managed to get by communicating with broken English and mismatched cultures. One point of interest was the culture of eye contact. In the film *KTOWN'92,* an interview of an African-American teacher Dujana Osborne reveals that her experience of going to a Korean-owned business was that they were always watching and following you in the store with the assumption that they were going to steal something. Osborne says she's aware of the stereotypes they have of blacks that have been generated from a small proportion of the population, just as blacks hold the "stereotype that all Koreans are rude, and that's just ridiculous." One of these rude acts include the lack of small talk and eye contact. Osborne states that in her community, eye contact is a show of respect and confidence. If there isn't eye contact, she says that it feels like they are lying to you or there is something shakey about the interaction. She understands that in the Korean community, making eye contact is culturally different because it means that one is arrogant. "Where we expect you to look us in the eye, and Koreans don't expect that. So that could be a big conflict" (Lee, 2017).

The LA Riots are better known to the Korean-American community as 사이구 (pronounced Sa-i-gu) which translates directly to 4-2-9 to commemorate the beginning of the riots. It is better known to the African-American community as the Rodney King Riots, as the riots began with the acquittal of the four officers who were on trial for the excessive force used against Rodney King. The general public would likely just remember it as the Los Angeles Riots of 1992, as if it was only another riot in Los Angeles after the Watts

Riot in the 1965. Even the naming of this event shows the impact it had on different communities and the qualitative aspect of the riots. The simple name of the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 reflects a quantitative perspective of its media coverage.

Even within the Asian-American community there was a divide, which the term itself was questioned in 1992 as a Japanese-American friend of Chinese-American journalist Elaine Woo mentioned, "We have nothing in common but appearance." Afraid of being taken as a Korean-American, Woo recalls another article back in 1992 when a Chinese-American writer was quoted on the front page of the Los Angeles Times, "Suddenly, I am scared to be Asian. More specifically, I am afraid of being mistaken for Korean" (Woo 2012). It seemed that everyone knew Koreans were targeted and abandoned in the riots, but were reluctant to acknowledge it directly. The tensions built within all the minority communities in Los Angeles seemed to be facilitated by the Los Angeles Police Department. Two of the major events of tension-building being the videotaped Rodney King beating and the extremely light sentencing for the Korean business-owner who shot and killed 15-year-old Latasha Harlins over a bottle of orange juice in 1991. Even within those two events, the perspectives differ and the qualitative inspection reveals much more than the media portrayed at the time and today.

First, we are watching grainy video footage in black and white without any sound in both. We don't know the history of either side, which we can later learn that Rodney King was on PCP among other drugs at the time. PCP is infamously known as a drug that came with stories of people gaining superhuman strength and becoming violent. One of the effects listed is: "Misperceptions of abilities including strength, speed, and invulnerability," which combined with another effect of "Delusions of grandeur with inflated sense of importance," could make for a dangerous combination (MacLaren, 2018). He also had a criminal history that included domestic violence and robbery, which also led to the high-speed chase of 110-115 miles per hour (also can be related to the PCP effects) because he was under parole and would be sent back to prison. After this beating that sparked the Riots, he would go on to more domestic violence and drug abuse, and eventually his death in the bottom of his swimming pool. The autopsy found a mix of drugs and alcohol, including PCP (Miles 2012).

On the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) side, the department was run by the controversial Darryl Gates known for his racism that was likely instilled in the rest of the force. He had an aggressive take on drug users, wanting to shoot casual drug users, which he emphasized was hyperbole after the fact. At a luncheon to LAPD officers and supporters in 1990, he positioned the department's view on the War on Drugs: "I want casual drug users to recognize exactly how treasonous I think their acts are. All they are doing is contributing to sustaining the war effort. They're aiding and abetting the enemy. They're supporting the enemy. They're giving money to the enemy" (Serrano, 1990).

After proposing to shoot casual drug users, he acknowledges that "that's not going to happen. Everyone knows that. But it sure got their attention, didn't it?" (Serrano, 1990). Supporters may say that this is just his style. Others may not be so lenient of someone who runs the LAPD.

He was also under fire for his comment, "It seems to me that we may be finding that in some blacks when it is applied, the veins or the arteries do not open as fast as they do on normal people." This essentially was translated to "blacks might be more likely to die from chokeholds because their arteries do not open as fast as they do on 'normal people,'" by the New York Times (AP 1982). While similar in translation, the qualitative data here shows that there is a deeper understanding of the character of the person who said it. Even the quoted comment is just a representation of the Gates' personality, thoughts, and beliefs, but we can analyze that to get a more accurate representation of Gates. This is dissimilar to quantitative data where a number is a number that has been pre-analyzed during the data collection, and then further analyzed in relation to other variables after the data collection.

The story of Latasha Harlin can be viewed in a similar path. What was her history with the store owner and vice versa? Just recalling from hearing perspectives from informal conversations, some say that Latasha became

violent first and had punched the storeowner repeatedly (which is shown in the video footage). Some say she actually was trying to steal products. And then there's the perspective of the Korean store owner who probably drew racial stereotypes from past experiences as a liquor store owner in South Central Los Angeles. This last bit, we can't really confirm because we would need more than a video footage to prove this.

Soon Ja Du, the store clerk, claimed she accidentally pulled the trigger after flashing her gun to Latasha. Judge Joyce Karlins who presided over this trial gave her a light sentence on voluntary manslaughter instead of murder because she didn't see the suspect as someone who would be a danger to the community nor would repeat these crimes (National Geographic, 2017). Latasha's mother talks to the press as she says Latasha was an honor roll A-student who received allowance every week and didn't need to steal orange juice. LAPD Commander John Bostic also points out that Latasha had the money in her hand to pay for the orange juice, which can be seen in the videotape (National Geographic, 2017).

Even in these tragic stories, it is obvious that we cannot simplify this to a quantitative measure for any real understanding of the story itself. Quantitative measures can be taken to perhaps look at crime rates at this store and other Korean-owned stores in the area, the likelihood that someone of Latasha's age and race of stealing something, other factors that day that formed Soon Ja Du's decision to grab Latasha's bag and suspect her for stealing, the rate of excessive force used by the LAPD, the likelihood of officers being under danger given a high-speed chase or a PCP user, and so forth. With all of that information, we may be able to describe a larger issue at hand or form a sense of judgment for what is right and wrong given the circumstances, but it will not give a sense of the lives that were lost and the way that people feel about that given their subjective knowledge of the issue and event at hand.

Using the Los Angeles Times as a Dataset

Individual stories told about tragic events shine a new light on the understanding of the event itself, whether it was someone completely unaffected telling a story of how normal everything seemed, or someone who became a victim of the violence and had a story told of their passing. In my visualization, I present a cyclical timeline of events with both qualitative and quantitative data as recorded by the Los Angeles Times to better understand the process in which the violence escalated and deescelated. More importantly, those whose deaths are related to the event are the true tragic stories that had the most immediate consequences: the loss of life that could have otherwise been avoided. The visualization will give the stories of those who died as recorded by the LA Times in order to see the direct consequences of the events on people as each moment of violence progressed. While some are directly related to recorded events throughout the day, some can be inferred from the general chaos that was occurring that day.

In my thesis, I will present this method of event recording and organization as an ideal means to archiving tragic events to better understand the event through the eyes of many.

Instead of having those who died become a statistic, I have purposefully added their names to the visualization with their day of death, a brief story of their life, and how and where they died. Tragic events too often state a number of people without their story to understand that the lives taken were lives of real people, rather than some abstract entity. I believe this is one aspect where quantitative data fails to provide the magnitude of the damage done. To show how this event led to their deaths, the visitor can track the series of events that had a strong connection to the cause, which will show when hovering over their names. Furthermore, visitors can click into the names to see images, articles, and events related to that person. A Google Street View of the approximate (and sometimes exact) location of their death is also available for visitors to visit the sites to remember the people who lost their lives to the chaos.

Qualitative data is difficult to simplify without transforming it into quantifiable data, and sometimes that transformation takes away significant importance from the qualitative data itself. For example, when looking at the number of people died as opposed to looking at the names of people who died, there is a disconnect when a person is grouped into a number instead of having their name listed. The number cannot give a story of the life of that person, and instead makes them anonymous. A name holds a magnitude of information, although usually only to those who knew that person's life history and those directly affected by that person's life and death.

By exploring a tragic event through the lens of qualitative data, I believe the historical event itself could be recorded in a more accurate truth than when told from the perspective of a few. This is not to discredit the importance of the outside perspective or quantitative data because of the relatively neutral position, especially when portrayed by a professional media organization like the Los Angeles Times. The data used in this visualization is exclusively from the Los Angeles Times which provides a neutral perspective of the series of events that occurred over five days starting on April 29, 1992. With a very brief description of the events, there is not much room for explicit analysis and detail, but rather creates a space for further research by the reader into certain aspects of the riots.

In addition to the written reporting, photojournalists of the Los Angeles Times and other media organizations risked their lives to capture the chaos of the riots on the ground. These photos can be paired with the written records as evidence of the events, but also to add detail, emotion, and a visual aspect to the written records. The inclusion of location also helps to find those exact locations today and how it changed and/or recovered since the riots, as well as how it brings a sense of reality to the event. With technology like Google Street View, users from all over the world can virtually stand in the middle of the street where the riots began. Rather than a distant place from a distant time, one can imagine being there as the chaos unfolded with the combination of photos records, written records, and geolocation.

The uniqueness of the Riots was the response (and the lack thereof), but also the difference between the media coverage of those on the outside compared to the stories of those affected. A local uprising that called for a national response that overshadowed the response of the local law enforcement. President George H.W. Bush addressed the nation during the Riots in response to it and the chain reaction of other riots rising in other parts of the country.

Memorials

Memorials that mark a tragic event tend to name those who faced the ultimate consequence of death, such as the 9/11 Memorial in New York City and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. There is a clearly marked enemy in these events, and in most tragic events. The Riots' enemy was abstract. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) were the enemies in mind, the Korean-American business community was the target, and the people were the victims and the suspects. There is no known memorial for this tragic event other than the media coverage. What would go on the memorial? The names of those who died include looters who died in a fire, teenagers caught in the crossfire, immigrants in a traffic accident due to a broken traffic light, business defenders mistakenly perished by friendly fire, visitor unfortunately caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, and senior citizens overwhelmed by riot-related stress. They aren't always heroes or always innocent, but they are people who lost their lives because of the Riots. Some whose deaths are listed are not even certainly riot-related, but happened to die from a remotely related cause.

Memorials tell a story through the names and the physical structure of the memorial itself. Beyond that, one must personally explore the topic further or enter a museum or exhibit dedicated to the events. These exhibitions usually feature physical objects, texts, videos, photos, and narrations from personal experiences.

A physical structure has limited interactivity, but there is always an attempt to have a deeper meaning and connection than simply a structure with names. The Vietnam Memorial was designed by Maya Ying Lin to list the names in chronological order by their date of death, which Edward Tufte argues adds another data dimension to the memorial. By listing the names chronologically, it helps to tell the story of the soldiers who died in the war while avoiding a design issue of having many similar names, such as 16 people named James Jones who died in the war (Tufte, 1990). The names in alphabetical order can be found in a "two-inch-thick Defense Department listing of Vietnam casualties" that would read more like a phone book (Tufte, 1990). This added dimension helps to not only differentiate similar names, but gives a time series look at the war itself. Viewers can see the first people to die, and the last to die, as well as how many people died during each tour, which could correlate with major events and turning points in the war. Did more soldiers die at a faster rate when LBJ was president, than when JFK or Nixon was president? Did the leak of the Pentagon Papers have an effect? How did the napalm attacks affect our soldiers? A glimpse of the effects can be seen in the chronology of the names.

Furthermore, an additional level of interactivity is added by the experience of looking for a specific name. Scruggs and Swerdlow point out that "locating specific names with the aid of a directory would be like finding bodies on a battlefield" (Tufte, 1990).

The additional data dimension is essential in telling the many stories of the lives lost in these events. In the 9/11 Memorial, there is the outdoor memorial supplemented with the indoor museum which adds a large dimension of data, as a museum should. The only problem is that one must pay to gain access to that dimension. The public, outdoors memorial doesn't simply name names, but designer Michael Arad adds a data dimension of grouping "names of those who died that day next to each other in a meaningful way, marking the names of family and friends together, as they had lived and died" (9/11 Memorial, 2018). The names are grouped by their relationships with the other victims by having them grouped by companies they worked for and where they were on that day such as the doomed flights, whether they were in the South Tower, North Tower, or the Pentagon.

Another design element is the raised lettering of the names that allow visitors to insert flowers and mini flags into the space of the letters. The interactivity dimension adds a way for visitors to contribute to the memorial with modest decorations. The memorial, unlike the Vietnam Memorial, is at the exact site of where the Twin Towers once stood. Two seemingly bottomless dark squares with water flowing down from every side give off an eerie sense of gloom and despair. Visitors

are at the actual location as they recall where they were when the American Airlines Flight 11 hit the first tower at 8:46 am on September 11, 2001. Whether they were watching the coverage on TV at home, school, work, or maybe on the radio while commuting, the memories are clear. Maybe they were mere blocks away, or maybe they were in the actual towers. I first heard it on a generally comedic morning radio show I always listened to, and thought it was a cruel joke. I was in middle school at the time, and we essentially watched the news cycle on a small television set rolled in on a trolley all day. I went home and continued watching the news. I'm sure my recollection is similar to most in this country living outside of the immediately affected areas, with no immediate relation to the people in those areas.

Beyond the days of the actual events, the effects continue to resonate. 9/11 brought about a high-security state for the U.S., where generations born after 2001 can barely remember what the airport experience was like before the Transportation Security Agency was created in response to the attacks. The Vietnam War and the exposure of the fraudulence of the war through the Pentagon Papers created a great distrust of the government and an importance of whistleblowers that led to more recent events like Edward Snowden, Wikileaks, Chelsea Manning, and so on. Veterans of the War suffer from the trauma of that brutal, inhumane war, and most of all the people of Vietnam suffer the damage and trauma of this war on their land.

When lives are quantified, it is as the designers Jan C. Scruggs and Joel L. Swerdlow point out why the names on the Vietnam War Memorial are better listed chronologically than alphabetically. If it was just listed like a phone book on granite, it destroys "the sense of unique loss each name carried" (Tufte, 1990). This sense is a subjective emotion that cannot be quantified, but must be presented in a qualitative method to best capture it.

Media and Quantifications

Media outlets tend to quantify the level of tragedy by statistics like how many injured, dead, and so on. The headline or the first few lines tend to list quantitative statistics of the consequences of a tragic event. Looking at the New York Times, if not the headline, the first line of the articles tend to be:

> "One officer was killed and the four attackers were shot dead Wednesday on Sumatra, as a wave of attacks continued." (Cochrane, 2018)
>
> "Overpass in India Collapses, Leaving at Least 18 People Dead." (Kumar, 2018)
>
> "A day after their soldiers killed 60 mostly unarmed Palestinians in Gaza, Israelis were defiant, defensive or blasé." (Kershner, 2018)

This is listed on a quick summary of the latest international news so that readers can skim and read deeper into articles that interest them, but they also come away with a snippet of the event enough to be aware of the consequences of what happened. In our time of a speedy news cycle, we can only digest snippets and form our own conclusions based on our prior knowledge of events, whether accurate or not. Also, this is not to pick on the New York Times, but to provide just a snippet of what nearly every media outlet does and has done to grab our attention for as long as anyone can remember. It's part of the business and a part of our short-attention-spanned nature. Especially in recent years, the need to grab our attention has only increased exponentially.

The danger isn't that the media outlet wants to provide quick snippets without the meat of the information, or something to tease readers to click into the article. It's that people tend to base a heavy importance on the quantitative data and typically don't bother with the qualitative data that exists in the article — just not in the headline or the first lines. For example, someone who doesn't know much about the Israel-Palestine conflict can come to uninformed opinions by reading just a line or two about the recent attacks. The line itself by Kershner takes a side and is easy to form an opinion, but if anything, should only form questions like "Why do the Israelis believe this to be justified?" or "What may have provoked this killing of unarmed people?" It is not to take a side, but to become more curious about it and explore further, if that is of interest.

Qualitative data takes more than a single line to understand the story as a whole. In terms of any of these articles, readers would need to read the full article, and research beyond what the author has to say. This takes a lot more time and focus than a reading a single line of statistics, so it makes sense that readers would likely rely on the 30-second snippet over the 30-minute read.

With that, if qualitative data can be simplified, it could potentially provide a deeper understanding of the topic itself than a simplified qualitative data visualization can show. Of course, it depends on the topic itself and whether a qualitative scope would be preferable to a quantitative scope. Events such as a tragedy is better portrayed in a qualitative visualization than an event in the financial sector, which would be better portrayed in a quantitative visualization.

For a closer look at why qualitative data can provide a deeper insight into a topic, Carl Auerbach guides researchers through why and how to conduct a qualitative research study. The example he uses would measure the dependent variable of fatherly affection towards children. A quantitative study on this would ask fathers to rank this by a number of 1-10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. From there, an independent variable would be the father's contact with his child measured by the minutes spent in the same room with his child (Auerbach, 2003).

While this simplified example seems like a solid beginning to a research study, the researchers found two major flaws in conducting this study. The first was that of cultural differences that are completely missed. Auerbach adds that they "didn't know enough to state meaningful hypotheses, particularly for cultures different from [their] own," meaning a white middle-class culture (Auerbach, 2003). A white middle-class father may be working one full-time job that can support and provide for the family, while showing affection by spending

time with his child as opposed to spending his time in pursuit of personal leisure like going out to play golf with his friends (Auerbach, 2003).

For fathers of other cultures and income levels, the definition of affection cannot be measured in the same way. A working-class Latino immigrant father who needs to work two full-time jobs to support and provide for his children shows his affection by sacrificing his time and labor for the good of his children (Auerbach, 2003). Using the measurement stick of a white middle-class father, the Latino father is not affectionate at all because he comes home after his children are already asleep, and leaves for work before they wake. For Haitian-American fathers, the definition of good fathering was heavily influenced by their religious beliefs (Auerbach, 2003). So while the researchers objectively set a definition of good fathering by time spent with their child, other cultures view good fathering in different ways that may not put such a heavy significance on the same variable.

The second flaw the researchers found was essentially that they could not "reflect subjective experiences," which is what they were attempting to quantify (Auerbach, 2003). To measure what the fathers felt about their children, a numerical measurement would be too simple and would provide misleading results.

In creating a thesis visualization, I took into account that it would not be a random sampling of photos or articles I chose to represent, but a theoretical sampling. A qualitative study struggles to find a random sample because the researcher would need to have full access to every subculture involved in the project (Auerbach, 2003). In the Riots piece, this would require access to every minority group involved, the LAPD, the city government, federal government, and so on. I rely on reporters who also are in a subculture of the media and also their respective communities, to go out and interview and write about different perspectives. I rely on photographers to be in places that represent the chaos and capture the events as they unfold. Even then, you see some photographers who were obviously more interested in capture one aspect than another. For most of my photos of the Korean-American community defending their businesses, it almost all came from Korean-American photographer Hyungwon Kang of the Los Angeles Times. He was likely to have better access and knowledge of where the problem areas were for Koreans because there was a vast network over the Korean radio and news requesting volunteers for help in different locations.

One of the photographers of whom I used the most photos (and personally thought were some of the most amazing photos), happened to be from Kirk McKoy. In my photo selection process, I went solely by which photos I thought best portrayed the events, and photos that directly correlated with the events that were recorded by the Los Angeles Times. A lot of them happened to be by McKoy. I haven't seen a photo of him or knew much about who he was personally until after my visualization was created. He may have been the only photographer to have photos from Florence and Normandie where the riots began. I didn't think much about this until recently when I realized that anyone who wasn't African-American was getting pulled out of their cars, beaten, and getting their cars destroyed. Before researching him, I hypothesized that he must have been black unless his credibility as a Los Angeles Times photographer kept him relatively safe (this was not the case). I researched McKoy, and he was an African-American. Even then, he had a gun pointed to his head in exchange for film, got into fights to keep his camera, and was shot at while running to his car (Campbell, 2017). His access to this subculture allowed him to capture these photos, just as Kang's was able to access the Korean-American subculture. If either photographer was switched with their colleagues' place, they would most certainly have been shot, beaten, or killed. McKoy recalls seeing a white female photographer colleague bloodied on the floor after sustaining a rock thrown at her head at the beginning of the riots which shows that it didn't matter if you were a photographer from the Los Angeles Times (Campbell, 2017). I believe this portrays the importance of access to subcultures for an accurate understanding of the qualitative data available in tragic events.

A theoretical sampling is the idea of developing the theory on a single sample, then elaborating on it further. In the example of the Riots, I first chose an article that

covered a large series of events by the hour, and a dataset consisting of the names of the people who died in the riots. From there, based on the stories of the lives lost and the events recorded, I was able to find photos that would best represent the relationships. Representing these events and people, in theory, would portray the chaos that happened in the city through the photos while supporting the need and strength of qualitative data in a tragic event. Using qualitative data to create a memorial of the people and the event, I was able to visualize the riots without overwhelming the user with every single photo and every single bit of information available.

I was able to expand on the stories of each person, even finding new connections that weren't made before because I had data from various sources. One example is of James L. Taylor and a photo I found that identified a dead body as just "a body of man found on Sunset Boulevard" (AP Photo, 1992, *See visualization under James L. Taylor*). Looking at the photo, I was able to identify the race, time of day, approximate age, location, and a clue on how he died (he had his shirt open with EKG stickers, and lying face-up in a pool of blood). Then I was able to find a person who was recorded as having died that day, who was black, matched the age approximation, location, and was recorded in the dataset to have been shot in the back.

Unfortunately, there was no further information on James beyond this except I was able to add another dimension of being able to visit the exact location of his death by analyzing the photo itself. I found in the dark background a pattern of windows that I was able to identify while virtually strolling down Sunset Boulevard. I believe that if there was a stronger emphasis on the qualitative data, similar to an example I will present later in this paper about journalists from the New York Times reporting on the stories of those who died in the attacks on 9/11, there may have been a story and a depth to understanding who this person was, and why he died. There had to be witnesses and a story because he was in front of a looted and torched business, but I am aware that the major difference is that the suspect at the time was likely still at-large. There was still a risk in giving that information out as a witness, even if only slightly, especially if it was gang violence or a personal vendetta.

Sadly, there are other photos I've discovered of dead individuals, one found in a trunk in front of a Ralph's supermarket and another surrounded by police officers after a shooting that left a Latino man on the streets of Kingsley and 5th Avenue (although the caption states it was 8th, I knew from the distance of a church in the background that it was much further up north than 8th) dead and another injured. Both came up empty in the dataset I had as no one was recorded dying in those two areas I searched. Seeing this strengthens my claim to qualitative data because they would never have been found in a qualitative dataset. The search ends at 64 deaths. Using qualitative data, I am able to check the location, and find supporting evidence, as well as discover new evidence.

Media and Qualitative Data

Three days after the attacks on September 11, 2001, a group of journalists from The New York Times led by Janny Scott of the Metro section including Diane Cardwell, Glenn Collins, Winnie Hu, Andrew Jacobs, Lynda Richardson, and Joyce Wadler began collecting personal stories of the victims (Brick, 2011). At this point, there were 146 confirmed dead—a fraction of what would turn out to be 2,400 dead.

The New York Times did something that Michael Brick of the New York Magazine (and also former New York Times writer) said was a "significant departure." They devoted 140 reporters, researchers, support staff, and editors to "chronicle how people were feeling" (Brick, 2011). The result was not an obituary, but a collection of 2,400 personal stories of the victims under 200 words each that was later called *The Portraits of Grief*.

The stories are heartbreaking. They are shared by co-workers, spouses, friends, parents, loved ones, and so on. Each story requires a pause to absorb and assess the emotions that overwhelm the readers. It gives life to every single individual number of that 2,400. The Portraits of Grief were published weekly a page or two at a time in the paper, but was eventually published all together in a book. A brief look on Amazon's related books show many other books that attempt to cover the stories of the victims in a smaller scale. Some focus on a hundred people with a more in-depth look, some only one story. Books are by far almost exclusively qualitative datasets, but they do require a large amount of time and focus in order to understand the data that is in there. It also requires a certain level of education to take advantage of these qualitative datasets in its full form. Otherwise, readers may miss important concepts and nuanced analyses in the book.

As is with trying to read a spreadsheet of quantifiable data, a method of organization and guidelines for consuming qualitative data can transform an overwhelming dataset into something digestible. The concept of data visualization is the same for both types of datasets, but it seems that the use of qualitative data is less preferred because of the time it takes to consume the data, as we can see from our preference for quick headlines. With that, the idea of making the consumption of qualitative data simpler would help to make the data more accessible. New ideas can arise from this accessibility, and hopefully better informed opinions.

Lastly, what this exploration of qualitative data avoids is the formation of what Marx and Engels called the 'mystical connection' in their 1970 publication of *German Ideology*. What is troubling is when data is portrayed with a missing step like in the Los Angeles Times' piece called "L.A. riots by the numbers," where they look at the change in racial composition of the LAPD and the general population in South Central LA. It compares 1990 to 2010, but leaves the reader wondering what they're supposed to take away from this and whether this really means anything changed (Kim, 2014). The piece claims that the police force closely resembles the population, which seems to imply that something like the Riots won't happen again because of the racial composition of the LAPD, thus it was because the LAPD was very white-heavy in the 90s that the Riots happened as it did (Kim, 2014).

In the essay by Robin James Smith, the 'mystical connection' is explained through Dorothy Smith's *Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology* as she references Marx and Engel to make a point about the recipe for making ideology:

> *Trick 1:* Separate what people say they think from the actual circumstances in which it is said, from the actual circumstances in which it is said, from the actual empirical conditions of their lives and from the actual individuals who said it.
>
> *Trick 2:* Having detached the ideas, they must no be arranged. Prove then an order among them which accounts for what is observed.
>
> *Trick 3:* The ideas are then changed 'into a person', that is they are constituted as distinct entities to which agency (or possibly causal efficacy) may be attributed. And they may be re-attributed to 'reality' by attributing them to actors who now *represent* the ideas.

The danger is that the quantitative data can create a layer of understanding that is missed and worse yet, can leave a gap in the analysis that creates an analytic distortion. This can then lead to creating an ideological character that forms this 'mystical connection' "between the data and the actual people and their phenomena" (Smith, 2014). In the example of the Riots, this could mean that when we see the numbers of how many people died, we can just assume that perhaps they're all looters and rioters who died, and therefore no sympathy is given. In seeing that the police force is now mirroring the demographics of the population, we can just assume that there isn't anymore injustice that can be race-related, and therefore we no longer need to worry about another event like the Riots. The Riots were much more than just a simple problem of racial demographics of the population and the police force, and even that wouldn't resolve the issues of the misunderstood cultures within the minority groups.

Furthermore, the two mysterious bodies discovered in the photo archives of the Riots would never be accounted for in the quantitative data available by media outlets. It should be 66 deaths at a minimum, and who knows if there are more that were unaccounted for? Being so sure in the quantitative can keep one from looking beyond and disputing the statistics.

Qualitative Data and Understanding Tragedy

The type of data used (qualitative or quantitative, or a combination of both) is better assessed given the situation. I make the argument that for the specific analysis of tragic events, a heavily-qualitative dataset is most appropriate. Beyond paying respects to the victims of an event, the event itself requires a subjective understanding. Similar to Auerbach's argument for a qualitative research study, there isn't a good measurement for tragedy. A life lost simplified to a tally mark limits the meaning of it drastically, and it can only be used for a limited scope of understanding. Was the amount of lives lost the lives of terrorists or those of innocent people? How innocent were they? What if it turned out the people that were considered "innocent" were actually people who were going to take the lives of a larger number of people (intentionally or unintentionally) in the coming days? None of this has any potential of interpretation when all you see is "Five dead in X event." Who were those five?

In a classic philosophical thought experiment of the trolley problem, a trolley is coming at full speed to a fork in the tracks, and you happen to be at that fork near a lever that can direct the train one way or the other. On its current course, the trolley is headed to kill five people who are unaware and meandering on the tracks. If you switch the lever, it will kill just one person, who is in the same unaware state on the other track. If we look at this thought experiment simply as a quantitative situation, we will undoubtedly pull the lever and the news headline would read "One dies in tragic trolley accident, five lives spared by the decision of bystander near lever." This decision is typically associated with that of a utilitarian.

A qualitative lens would give the story of that one person. That one person is your significant other, who also happens to be a doctor who saves lives. The headline would read "Bystander sacrifices world-renowned doctor for the lives of five" or simply "Bystander murders world-renowned doctor," depending on who is reporting it and what intentions they have. Or what if that person is an evil person who had caused irreparable harm to others? The headline would read "Bystander sacrifices known murderer for the lives of five," or something to that extent. The additional layer of information can drastically change the perspective of the actions and events itself, even though in the objective, quantitative sense, it is the same result. Objectively, it is still that one person is killed for the sake of five.

In creating a memorial, typically we view the names on the memorial as those who were honorable people. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial displays the names of the soldiers who lost their lives. Most were people who did not have a choice because they were drafted, but we don't know if they were good or evil people. The 9/11 Memorial displays the names of the innocent who lost their lives to the attacks on the Twin Towers. Again, we don't know if they were good or evil people in there, but we do know that they also did not choose to put their lives at that level of risk by going to work that day. If the planes had crashed into a maximum-security prison with 2,400 prisoners who were all known violent criminals, would there ever be a memorial made for the prisoners? It seems unlikely. They did not choose to be put at that level of risk, as well. If those same type of prisoners were sent to Vietnam to fight the war, would there be a memorial made for them? It seems likely because they still fought for their country, and in place of innocent young people being drafted. In a way, they would be the sacrificial group on the trolley tracks. Lastly, what if the war was completely unjust? Would it make more sense to make a memorial for the Vietnamese who lost their lives due to America's unjust war using criminal soldiers?

What is a tragedy and how is it measured? It's extremely subjective. We can look at classic examples of Shakespeare plays for tragedies in a literary sense where you only learn of the tragedy because you know the stories of each character in Hamlet. Without knowledge of the background and the stories, you're just a bystander watching some crazy person going through turmoil, hallucinating, and eventually they have a swordfight and everyone ends up dying. What is Hamlet without the monologues and confessions? When we see events happening in the world that are tragic, what are they without the qualitative data?

This focuses on the question of the purpose of a memorial. In a sense, a memorial plays to the emotions of the user to remember the event. The event itself is sanitized by the names that are typically exploited to justify memorializing and justifying an event. While we can pay respect to the lives lost in the Vietnam War, the war itself was highly deceptive, a loss, and corrupt. Even for the 9/11 Memorial, the names hide the fact that the U.S. had provoked these attacks and knew of an oncoming attack for years before 2001. To avoid sounding like a conspiracy theorist, I will briefly refer the reader to the Pentagon Papers leaked by Daniel Ellsworth and the Pulitzer Prize winning book Ghost Wars by Steve Coll. It would be naive to think this was a just war and an out-of-the-blue attack, respectively.

Memorials are created to foster reconciliation, but to avoid prolonging divisions and resentment. The University of Cambridge asks if memorials matter—and conclude by answering yes, but it depends on how we use them (Viejo-Rose, 2011). According to Simon Schama, professor at Columbia University, memorials are first and foremost created to "honor the dead and those immediately around them." He continues on in his interview independently agreeing with Viejo-Rose by saying that beyond that "the question for a larger society is whether or not such memorials work" (Conan, 2011). In the end, the goal is to "make us reflect on the reasons for the sacrifice" (Conan, 2011).

A memorial to the Los Angeles Riots aims to do just that. It honors the dead by bringing the focus to the 64 who lost their lives, and then provides a space to reflect on the reasons for the sacrifice of these lives.

I believe a memorial should be transparent and telling of the historical event itself to provide a relatively objective viewpoint of what had happened, but the main focus should be on the subjective stories of the people who lived through the events, and those who died because of the events. It should be a space that allows those who lived through it to be able to tell their stories, as well. We often forget the survivors of the wars, attacks, and tragic events. Some continue on, some go down a dark path, but all are forever affected.

Creating a memorial with those criteria provides some challenges for a physical structure, so it would best be created in a virtual space for full interactivity, especially given that we have access to so much more information all connected on the internet. Using the vast amounts of resources available through media sources, virtual memorials can organize essential information, but also can act as a repository. It can also be accessed from anywhere, which allows for greater accessibility, and it can continue growing, which allows for continuous learning.

This also means that there are limited constraints in terms of transparency because of the vast amounts of information available and the ability to exhibit various sides of the event due to its allowance for subjectivity in qualitative data. Because there is so much information out there about the Riots, the visualization needs to set parameters, which it does by limiting itself to a time series of five days and stories of the 64 lives. Within these parameters, there is a continual potential for growth. The stories of the lives can continue to grow with more information that may be added. Events can be added to the time series, such as a record of the police communications that were happening at 5:00pm when the riots first began on April 29, 1992. In it, you will see that the police were overwhelmed and retreated. More names can also be added as I've already mentioned the two unidentified bodies as evidenced in the photos I've discovered. There's also a John Doe #80 in the current list, along with a handful of unsolved deaths. In a sense, it isn't over, yet, and I wanted to be sure that my visualization could continue to grow as more information is gathered.

The 64 lives lost in the Riots do not hold a singular side or opposition to another. They are simply the lives lost during the riots. Some may have died whether or not the Riots occurred, as there is constant gang violence in those parts of Los Angeles, especially in the early 90s. Some sound like domestic disputes, some died of heart attacks that were attributed to the stress caused by watching the Riots on the news, and some may have simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Then there are those who died obviously looting a store besides the name of someone who was defending a store. For the Riots, the chaos wasn't one side

versus another, but a free-for-all. Some communities were targeted and some people were targeted for their skin color, but looking at the percentage of the race of those who died, it doesn't reflect a correlation. While the Korean-American community was targeted and four white police officers were acquitted, only 16 of the 64 who died were Asian or White. The majority (47 of 64) were Black or Latino (Kim, 2017).

Including all of them regardless of if they were innocent bystanders or looters, allows the visitors to form their own opinions, but it keeps the memorial authentic in not forcing judgment. This is part of the exploration. The chaos in and of itself was objective. It held no bias, and like so, the memorial aims to hold no bias or implications by treating each victim equally. It provides a historical account that doesn't go into too much detail or have strongly biased language, so that visitors can read basic information about the events and look further into it if they so wish.

Digital Memorials for the Modern Day

In 1992, the internet wasn't nearly as widely available or utilized as it was even by 1996, and nowhere close to today. Information and news travels quickly and is consumed even quicker. Our attention spans narrow and media outlets strive to match that span. We hear of one tragic event after another without having time to finishing mourning one tragedy before mourning the next tragedy. In a time when the only important news was the Riots (and the subsequent riots that spread across the country), the coverage that led to the photographs, articles, analysis, and more provided a rich collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Given that the Riots occurred 26 years ago from the time of this writing, there has been much analysis of the events.

Visualizing a tragic event today would be a bit more difficult because of the overload of information that is both great in quantity, but lacking in quality. Social media provides quick and dirty commentary with little to no vetting process. Media outlets tend to over-sensationalize in order to grab the attention of readers and measure success by the number of clicks. It is too much data and too little quality control. It is also too soon to visualize events that have occurred in recent years because of the lack of research and analysis completed on the specific events. The best way to go about visualizing recent events would be to create clusters through machine learning or the likes to be able to sift through the millions of social media posts to generate a common theme. Even then, there would be the danger of the 'mystical connection' by characterizing the ideology of a cluster without truly knowing what is in it. Is it possible to actually read through these millions of posts or is it now time to trust the mystics?

If the Riots happened in 2017, the millions of photos available from amateur photographers on their iPhones, Androids, and DSLRs would flood the archives rendering the ability to sift through the majority of them a nearly impossible task for one person. Video coverage would be endless. Beyond that, so much of the information is either unavailable or lost. Radio broadcasts that may or may not exist anymore, such as that of Radio Korea during the riots. Video footage of the television broadcasts that may be tucked away in the archival records of newsrooms that have yet to surface on YouTube. Photographs that were damaged or taken from photographers like that of Kirk McKoy when he had a gun pointed to his head in exchange for his roll of film that was destroyed by the perpetrator. Photographs that were just left out because of its seeming unimportance when deciding which would be shown, or photographs that weren't taken because film was limited in quantity unlike digital photos today. Many videos would be lost to the 24-hour cycle of Snapchat and Instagram Stories.

For this reason, questioning how memorials can be made for more recent events would require a deeper dive into the authenticity of memorials in the digital and information (over)abundant age. For now, we can comfortably create these archival memorials for events where a data overload wasn't possible, although that ultimately begs the question of authenticity.

Conclusion

The most significant conclusion for qualitative data is that it isn't mean to be an exhaustive list of data that accurately describes or proves an idea. Instead, it is meant to leave the audience understanding the issue on a deeper level where more questions can be asked, and curiosity can be piqued. As is in philosophy, we are left with more questions than answers and I believe that is the most accurate portrayal of tragic events in visualizations.

My biases are obvious, starting with my decision to add "Sa-i-gu" as the title to the summary in my visualization, but I've also strived to represent the chaos from an objective standpoint by using the guidelines of the Los Angeles Times' datasets to drive my visualization. Time is the one thing we all have in common, and that is the largest visual element of my design. Everyone has their own story of what happened and what they experienced subjectively, as do I, and I wanted to leave the space open for the users to think of their own personal stories and how it fits in to these five radiating circles and every life that was lost.

As Auerbach concludes his qualitative study on fatherhood, he states that their "goal has always been to change the world, not simply to describe it" (Auerbach, 2003). Similarly, I wish for this memorial to more than just describe the the Riots. I want it to help make the world a better place by avoiding the repeat of history when it comes disguised as something different. If we understand the core of the issue, we might be able to spot it in any form in the future.

While not fully dismissing quantitative research because there is no doubt great benefits in the bigger picture sense to detect patterns and make changes, one of the great benefits of qualitative research is that it "focuses on the voices of the participants. Therefore, the experts are the participants, rather than the researchers" (Auerbach, 2003). This was crucial in creating my visualization. I am by no means an objective researcher, but a small participant of the piece with a subjective view because I am part of the Korean-American community no matter how impartial I may try to be. The experts are the stories of those who died, the photos that were taken of the events, and the records of what had happened. The data captured from those times are the ones to tell the expert story. The videos, Street Views, interviews, articles, and so on are the participants of this memorial and I hope they will inform the visitors of what happened in those five days. I hope it will strike the curiosity of the viewers to learn and think more about what happened before and after those five days, as well. At a minimum, I hope that visitors will not forget what happened.

So what is the social action agenda in creating this memorial for The 1992 Los Angeles Riots? I believe it is to remember those who lost their lives to the riots, but also all those who were affected. It is to question why this happened and how it happened, and to generate more and more questions. From there, we can make changes in our society, whether it is to try harder to understand another culture and not take offence when someone doesn't understand your culture. Maybe it is to talk to and get involved in your community and the communities of others to surface any underlying issues that cause tensions. Whatever questions arise, I hope that the next time we see another tragic event, we don't simplify it to a number, but rather feel an obligation and desire to learn who these people were and why this event is so tragic. If we quantify tragedy, we will become numb to the sorrow and depth of the issues, especially given recent events of school shootings, wars, mass shootings, and all the tragedy that have been too soon forgotten and added to a growing numbered list. Whether we shout reform, or offer thoughts and prayers, if we never deeply understand the tragedy, who's to say we'll ever understand what it takes to make the right changes or that we are even asking the right questions to take a step in the right direction?

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