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Surmounting the Verification Barrier Between the *Field* of Professional Human Rights Fact-Finding and the *Non-Field* of Digital Civilian Witnessing

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The scene is a dusty stretch – possibly of road – framed by rubble, old tires, barrels, abandoned vehicles and crumbling walls. The footage is shaky, giving the impression that the camera is handheld. A man runs out of a doorway opposite and shots ring out. Small puffs of smoke erupt behind and ahead of him, suggesting that bullets are hitting the wall along which he runs. A moment of calm elapses, and then the camera pans left to a young boy, probably around eight years old, getting up from the ground. The boy begins to run toward an abandoned car; the shots recommence and a puff of smoke emerges from his chest. He falls, slow-motion, first to his knees, and then to his side. He lies there, face away from the camera, for a few seconds, then begins to run again, head down, toward the car. He drops behind it, then emerges dragging a younger girl in a bright pink top by the arm. They both run back the way he came, ducking at first, then running faster as the shooting continues. Throughout, male voices that seemingly issue from behind the lens excitedly talk, regularly crying "*Allah Akbar!*" The video ends a few seconds after the children exit the frame to the left.

This video first appeared on YouTube, posted by a new account on November 10th, 2014 and titled "SYRIA! SYRIAN HERO BOY rescue girl in shootout." The video quickly went

viral, reposted by Syrian activists and viewed by millions. It also made headlines in the mass media; the *New York Post*, for example, ran a story the next day entitled, "Harrowing Video Shows Boy Saving Girl from Sniper Fire in Syria" (Perez, 2014). Then, in a shocking turn of events – though not so shocking, perhaps, to the YouTube and reddit users who had been questioning the video's authenticity in comment threads – the BBC uncovered the video's cinematic origins (Hamilton, 2014). Using funding from the Norwegian Film Institute and Arts Council Norway, a Norwegian director and his team shot the video in Malta on a set used in blockbuster films *Troy* and *Gladiator*. They employed professional child actors and Syrian refugees to provide the running commentary. The filmmakers explained their motivations in a press release:

> By publishing a clip that could appear to be authentic we hoped to take advantage of a tool that's often used in war; make a video that claims to be real. We wanted to see if the film would get attention and spur debate, first and foremost about children and war. We also wanted to see how the media would respond to such a video (Klevberg, 2014).

The backlash was tremendous. Social media users widely condemned the video, as did journalists and human rights workers. Several of these posted an open letter to the director and his funders on a citizen journalism website. At the heart of their condemnation was the video's implication for the information documenting the Syrian conflict, namely that it "placed the burden of proof on those suffering rather than on those who cause the suffering." As the letter explained it:

> In such a conflict, deciphering the real from the fake is a difficult task and many activists, journalists and analysts spend countless hours sifting through videos in order to provide accurate information to the public. The intentionally misleading nature in which it was disseminated added to rather than detracted from the misinformation in Syria. This film will feed in to attempts to cast doubts on real stories coming out of Syria by citizen journalists and professional journalists alike (Bellingcat, 2014).

The "Hero Boy" video highlights both the potential and the problem of produser documentation of facts for use by information professionals such as journalists and human rights researchers. On the one hand, if the video had been real, it would have been an example of how digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) facilitate new sources of information and new communication channels. Information and communication technology is a catchall category that refers to the hardware and software that facilitate the production, storage, transmission, and reception of information (McKenzie, 2007); in this case, the ICTs of smartphones and social media are most relevant. In the context of a country such as Syria, largely closed to outside observers, YouTube videos are a crucial source of information for people within and without its borders and contribute to an information environment incomparable to the past. Consider, for example, the fact that local reports about the Syrian government's 2013 chemical weapons attack in Ghouta appeared on social media within hours. In contrast, the regime of President Hafez al-Assad was able to keep the 1982 Hama massacre under wraps for quite some time (Lynch, Freelon, & Aday, 2014). Facilitating the exercise of voice to report on atrocities, and specifically the exercise of civilian witnessing in the absence of professionals, is a potent manifestation of ICTs' pluralism potential.

On the other hand, the video turned out to be a fake and, as such, highlights the misinformation problem plaguing professionals trying to evaluate produser information for use in news, advocacy, and courts. In the Syrian case, instances of misinformation are easy to find. In some cases, misinformation even duped the experts, as when the BBC briefly used a photo of a child leaping over a row of shrouded bodies, which had been circulating on Twitter, to illustrate a 2012 Houla massacre. This photo actually dated from 2003 and was taken by a photojournalist in Iraq (Hamilton, 2012). The contrast between the social media-enabled

potential of pluralism and the problem of misinformation has fueled a proliferation of tactics and technologies to support the verification of produser information. That said, verification remains a key barrier to the professional use of such information.

This chapter draws on the case of human rights fact-finders' use of civilian witnesses' digital reports of human rights violations, although the issues it highlights are relevant for any professional use of produser information to establish facts. Using data from an ongoing digital ethnography of social media use in human rights work, I first explain why the verification of this information is so important yet can be so difficult. To do this, it is helpful to draw loosely on Bourdieu's (1983) classic sociological concept of a *field* of production. Participants in a field subscribe to a shared logic (or logics), namely the rules, explicit and implicit, that govern success in a particular field and thus the practices in that field (Thompson, 2010). Rules about the value and use of information are central to any field that trades in information, and we will see that verification is at the core of the human rights fact-finding field's information logic. In contrast, the digital produser category of civilian witnesses of human rights violations is largely a *non-field*. The meeting of this professional field and amateur non-field is where the verification barrier arises.

Verification of human rights information involves the corroboration of information's content and metadata (e.g. source, place, time, and conditions of production) using a variety of methods and sources; verification is necessary for the transformation of information into useable evidence. The verification of digital information is facilitated by *verification strategies* and *verification subsidies*. These verification strategies are part of the cultural capital – or the knowledge central to success – of the human rights fact-finding field. A field's cultural capital can be spread through the field's networks, as seen in the verification knowledge exchange and

training initiatives underway in the human rights fact-finding field (Bottero & Crossley, 2011). The notion of verification subsidies builds on Gandy's (1982) influential idea of information subsidies, namely tactics used by information producers to make it cheaper for others to use their information. Verification subsidies, powered by humans and machines, either take on some of the labor required by various verification strategies or support the provision of metadata. As accidental civilian witnesses usually are not members of a field, they often lack the networks necessary to build cultural capital about verification subsidies – or even to be aware of the need for verifiability. Given this, a number of third parties have innovated verification subsidies to lower the verification barrier between the human rights fact-finding field and the civilian witnessing non-field.

Verification as Core to the Information Logic of the Human Rights Fact-Finding Field[i]

Fact-finding involves the gathering and evaluation of information so it can be used as evidence in advocacy and in courts. Evidence is key to generating accountability for human rights violations (Clark, 2001). This evidence is, however, frequently challenged by those it implicates in human rights violations. These challenges are on two fronts: the veracity of the evidence and the credibility of its source. A human rights organization's reputation for credibility – part of its symbolic capital – is a fundamental asset, not only in advocacy, but also for garnering donations and volunteers, for motivating mobilization, and for influencing policy-making. In order to protect the integrity of evidence as well as institutional reputation, the human rights fact-finding field has developed robust and transparent fact-finding methodologies that emphasize verification strategies (Brown, 2008; Edwards & Koettl, 2011; Gibelman & Gelman, 2004; Hopgood, 2006; Land, 2009a, 2009b; Orentlicher, 1990; Satterthwaite & Simeone, 2014). For example, Physicians for Human Rights' (2014) digital "Map of Attacks on Health Care in Syria" links to an exposition of its methodology several thousands of words long.

Human Rights Watch (2014) similarly features a lengthy description of its research methodology on the Publications section of its Web site.

Because of the expertise that fact-finding requires, the development of human rights methodologies has evolved in tandem with the professionalization of human rights (Alston, 2013; Land, 2009b). Intergovernmental organizations drove the first generation of fact-finding, in which diplomats, experts, and lawyers reviewed on-the-ground research to write reports for governments and intergovernmental groups. The large, international human rights NGOs drove the second generation, which drew largely on witness interviews and produced reports targeted at public opinion as well as political bodies. The third generation is characterized by more flexibility with respect to fact-finding methodology and research output. This generation is born of ICTs and a growing number and diversity of contributors to human rights fact-finding – in particular, the digitally-enabled escalation of information produced and transmitted by civilian witnesses (Alston, 2013; Satterthwaite, 2013).

The Non-Field of Digital Civilian Witnessing of Human Rights Violations

At the risk of further proliferating descriptors about produsers, I use the concept of *civilian witnesses* to refer to eyewitnesses digitally documenting human rights violations (Allan, 2013). Through the definition of a civilian as outside of the profession in question, this nomenclature highlights the inexpert nature of the production of information by civilian witnesses[ii]. Information from civilian witnesses has long been a cornerstone of human rights fact-finding, in part because of the human rights community's commitment to amplifying the voices of those holding powerful actors to account (Satterthwaite, 2013; Satterthwaite & Simeone, 2014). Traditionally, this information was gathered by human rights fact-finders conducting on-the-ground research or witness interviews. As such, fact-finders had oversight of the production and gathering of information. The introduction of ICTs such as smartphones and

social media platforms has facilitated civilian witnesses' autonomous production and transmission of information. In other words, ICTs support the rise of amateurs in a fact-finding process traditionally dominated by professionals (Land, 2009b).

That said, people spontaneously reporting on human rights violations via ICTs are a varied bunch – and not entirely unprofessional. At one end of the spectrum are activists who can be thought of as belonging to what Postill (2015) called non-institutionalized movement-fields. These fields are characterized by logics and networks facilitating the sharing of cultural capital, including tips traded by activists on how to produce verifiable information, such as stating the time and place while filming, including a shot of a newspaper, and panning the horizon for landmarks (Wardle, 2014). This more professionalized end of the civilian witness spectrum is akin to what Human Rights Watch (2014) calls the "trusted contacts" whom human rights fact-finders traditionally relied upon for information. What is new and of concern here are the number and variety of *accidental* civilian witnesses reporting information digitally at the other end of the civilian witness spectrum. Accidental civilian witnesses are those who happen to be, as Murphy (2013) puts it, "in the wrong place at the wrong time" and who choose to document and share unfolding events. This category of civilian witness is a non-field; people engage in the practice of human rights reporting randomly or sporadically and by definition have neither a shared logic, nor – in all likelihood – cultural capital in the form of digital verification literacy, nor the networks to gain it.

The affordances of smartphones and social media underpin the proliferation of accidental civilian witnesses of human rights violations. Affordances are what new technologies allow their users to do, and are shaped by the technology's characteristics or materialities (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). A key affordance here is the facilitation of user-generated content through

mobile devices equipped with cameras that support the capture of information and through social media platforms that ease its transmission. Another is the disembodiment of information from the time, place, and source of production – which means information can, for example, cross closed national borders more easily than ever before (McPherson, 2014).

The very affordances that allow for information's production and transmission by civilian witnesses can be hindrances for human rights fact-finders who are gathering and evaluating information. The user-generated content affordance has created a flood of information from unknown sources puporting to document human rights violations all over the world. Collecting and organizing this information for evaluation poses the risk of overwhelming the fact-finding teams at human rights organizations. As Lara Setrakian, Editor-in-Chief of online news outlet *Syria Deeply* puts it, "…The Syria story has a big data problem" (Setrakian, 2013). Additionally, the disembodiment affordance means that metadata, which is so crucial to the evalution of the information's veracity, may be meager or missing. This may be because civilian witnesses may not know to supply it or because many mainstream social media platforms strip out this metadata during upload. As such, the digitally-enabled rise of civilian witnesses means that human rights fact-finders are faced with more information that is more difficult to verify than ever before.

Verification Strategies in the Field of Professional Human Rights Fact-Finding

Although the nature of information being verified and the individual techniques for verification are shifting rapidly as ICTs evolve, the fundamentals of verification remain constant (Silverman & Tsubaki, 2014, p. 8). Fact-finders must establish the source, place, and time of production and cross-reference content and metadata using other methods and sources (Wardle, 2014). In the context of the dual pressures of the digital information deluge and the limited resources of both human rights organizations and civilian witnesses, verification strategies are

about securing and speeding the verification process. They can be supported by what some refer to as *digital information forensics*: the use of digital tools and databases in combination with tried and true gumshoe tactics.

A first stage of verification, one that is necessary to identify the original source of the information, is establishing the information's chain of custody. This process can unearth instances where information has been manipulated, as in the scraping practice prevalent on YouTube, in which one user re-uploads another's YouTube content with no indication of its provenance (Wardle, 2014). Reverse image search platforms such as those provided by Google or TinEye can help; users can upload or link to an image, and these platforms will return the locations of matching copies.

Once the chain of custody is traced back to the original source, the fact-finder should ideally speak with the individuals to hear and assess his or her account of witnessing and documenting the event (Barot, 2014). Verification experts recommend that the fact-finder also examine the digital footprint of the source, looking at the individual's organizational affiliations, posting history, followers and friends, and location. This supports an understanding of her identity and motivations (Browne, 2014; Kilroy, 2013; Meier, 2011a; Silverman & Tsubaki, 2014). For example, a social media account's longevity may indicate credibility, because users who post misinformation have been known to do it via a newly-created account (Koettl, 2014a). "There is no quick way" of verifying the identity of a social media account, Wardle warned; rather, source verification requires "painstaking checks," akin to "old-fashioned police investigation" (Wardle, 2014, pp. 29–30).

The next stages are identifying and corroborating the time and place of production. The civilian witness may divulge this information in an interview or may have included it with the

file. This inclusion may occur during production, as with verbal statements of the location and date made while the camera is running, or during transmission, as with commentary appended to a video uploaded to YouTube. Time and place may also be evident from landmarks, shadows, weather, signage, clothing, weapons, and dialect captured in the digital file (Kilroy, 2013; Koettl, 2014a). Furthermore, it may be identified via metadata automatically embedded in the file; digital platforms such as FotoForensics and the Citizen Evidence Lab's YouTube Data Viewer facilitate metadata extraction (Barot, 2014; Koettl, 2014c).

Content and metadata can be corroborated via digital databases, which can easily be searched for digital footprints (i.e. pipl.com), landmarks (Google Maps), and weather (Wolfram Alpha), for example (Silverman, 2014). It may be cross-referenced against other digital files, such as by time-syncing multi-perspective produser videos of the same event or by comparing social media information with satellite images (The Rashomon Project, n.d.; Wang, Raymond, Gould & Baker, 2013). Of course, digital content and metadata can also be corroborated offline through conducting on-the-ground research and consulting trusted and expert networks, such as forensic pathologists, who can assess the causes of digitally-documented deaths (McPherson, 2014).

Building Cultural Capital about Digital Verification

The successful verification of digital information benefits from the dissemination of cultural capital among fact-finders and civilian witnesses. Specifically, fact-finders should learn about how to deploy digital verification strategies, and civilian witnesses should learn about how to provide verification subsidies. Various initiatives are underway to disseminate this cultural capital, though their spread depends in part on the extent to which their target audiences are networked.

For fact-finders, examples include the *Verification Handbook*, published in early 2014 by the European Journalism Centre and which gathers insights from leading verification experts (Silverman, 2014). Amnesty International's Citizen Evidence Lab website, also launched in 2014, provides guidance as well as a knowledge exchange space for human rights fact-finders about using digital information (Koettl, 2014a). Human rights organization New Tactics in Human Rights (2014) hosts online knowledge exchange conversations, publicly available and archived, including one in 2014 on "Using Video for Documentation and Evidence."

For civilian witnesses, human rights NGO Witness provides a guide on including key information in human rights videos – such as the what, when, where, and (if safe) the who of the video. Though not in so many words, the guide is essentially explaining how to create verification subsidies:

> Adding this information to videos will make it much easier for reviewers that were not at the scene of the human rights incident to verify the content. Easier verification means there is a better chance that the video will be used to secure justice (Witness, n.d.).

Verification training initiatives must come to the attention of fact-finders and civilian witnesses in order for them to build their cultural capital. As evident in the open knowledge exchange events run by New Tactics in Human Rights, the human rights field is characterized by networked solidarity that supports the diffusion of such cultural capital (Atack, 1999; Dütting & Sogge, 2010; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; McLagan, 2006). At the activist end of the civilian witness spectrum, networked solidarity may also be enabling the diffusion of knowledge about verification subsidies. As one of my human rights fact-finder interviewees told me in 2013, with reference to Syria:

> …I have to say there has been an improvement in the way that activists are putting the information online. At they beginning, they were thinking that just by taking this video

> online, it could be useful. But with practice, they have begun to learn: No, you need to record things. You need to say who this person is or where this is happening. By whom.

In contrast, the non-field of accidental civilian witnessing does not provide natural opportunities for learning either about the informational needs of the verification process nor about how civilian witnesses might support these with verification subsidies. An alternative to the difficult task of building accidental civilian witnesses' cultural capital, therefore, is the provision of verification subsidies by third parties.

Verification Subsidies

Verification subsidies tend to fall into one of two categories: those that supplant some of the labor of fact-finders and those that enhance the information provided by civilian witnesses. In each category, both human-driven and machine-driven initiatives exist. The deployment of third party verification subsidies involve a variety of actors – from NGOs and the academy to commercial actors making a business of verification, such as Storyful, and those that are subject to lobbying by NGOs to build verification subsidies into their ICTs.

In terms of the first category of verification subsidies, one human-powered option is harnessing the crowd to undertake aspects of fact-finding. Crowdsourcing involves institutions turning over tasks traditionally done by a specific individual to a big, unspecified group recruited through an open call – though, in bounded crowdsourcing, crowd membership is limited by invitation (Howe, 2006; Meier, 2011b). One example of crowd-sourced verification is Veri.ly, a Web-based project in development via collaboration between the University of Southampton, Masdar Institute, and the Qatar Computing Research Institute. Veri.ly asks contributors to supply yes or no answers to questions about veracity and to support these answers with textual or visual evidence (Naroditskiy, 2014; Veri.ly, 2014). The rationale for the latter is that "verification… requires searching for evidence rather than just liking or retweeting something,"

in the words of Veri.ly co-inventor Victor Naroditskiy (2014). As such, Naroditskiy (2014) explained that Veri.ly is deliberately positioned in contrast to sites such as reddit, which allows up or down votes and notoriously facilitated the crowd's misidentification of the Boston Marathon bombers. An example of a bounded crowd is the Citizen Media Evidence Partnership, a project being developed by Amnesty International's Sensor Project and Will H. Moore of Florida State University. This project trains student groups to become "verification corps" dedicated to triaging information for verification by experts (Koettl, 2014b; Moore, 2014).

Others are exploring the machine provision of verification subsidies for fact-finders. TweetCred, for example, developed by a team of academics from the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology and the Qatar Computing Research Institute, attempts this through a machine-learning algorithm. TweetCred rates the credibility of individual Tweets real-time by evaluating them against 45 criteria. These include aspects of the Tweet's content, such as emoticons, swearwords, and hashtags, as well as the metadata of the Tweet and its author, such as number of followers (Gupta, Kumaraguru, Castillo, & Meier, 2014).

In terms of the second category of verification subsidies, those that address the deficit in metadata in information supplied by civilian witnesses, one approach is to encourage civilian witnesses to include metadata at the point of transmission. The Syria Tracker project, for example, which crowdsources information about the conflict in Syria, requires submitters to enter a title, description, category (including "Killed," "Missing," "Revenge Killings," and "Eyewitness Report"), their location, and the time of reporting. Optional information includes digital images, contact information, and links to news sources and external video (Syria Tracker, n.d.).

Machine-supported options to enhance civilian witness information automate the inclusion of metadata at the point of capture. InformaCam, under development by Witness and the Guardian Project, allows users to embed data about the time, date, and place of videos or photos via information gathered by their smartphones' sensors from cell towers, wi-fi, and Bluetooth networks. Users can employ digital signatures and encryption and can transmit files securely over Tor; the aim is for InformaCam to allow for the collection and transmission of "ironclad digital media that can be used in courts of international law," according to Sam Gregory of Witness (InformaCam, n.d.).

ICTs that engage civilian witnesses in the provision of verification subsidies have the added benefit of training them in how to produce and transmit future reports. Of course, this depends on civilian witnesses knowing about and using these rather than mainstream options for producing and transmitting information, which do not, at the moment, prompt for or automate comprehensive metadata inclusion. Witness is, however, advocating for the inclusion of an "eyewitness mode" resembling InformaCam as standard in pre-loaded photo and video applications on smartphones and in social media platforms (Gregory, 2014). The accidental civilian witness would not need much in the way of cultural capital concerning verification to provide subsidies through the eyewitness mode. Even so, mainstreaming this feature allows the accidental civilian witnesses to gain cultural capital about verification by simply exploring standard features of their smartphones and social media accounts.

Pluralism and Power at the Boundary of the Field of Professional Human Rights Fact-Finding and the Non-Field of Digital Civilian Witnessing

In sum, what I have shown is that a barrier exists between the field of human rights fact-finding and the non-field of accidental civilian witnessing: the practice of verification. To help understand why this barrier exists, I have loosely relied on Bourdieu's (1983) concept of field.

This concept is analytically useful for at least four reasons. First, it allows us to imagine the social space of human rights fact-finding as delimited by a boundary. Gaining access to this space – and for those documenting a human rights violation, access to this space is a key channel for generating accountability – requires the surmounting of particular barriers. Second, for fields that trade in information, such as human rights fact-finding, rules about the value and use of information are central to their logics. These information values and uses can form some of the barriers to the field; in the case of human rights fact-finders, informational veracity is highly valued, both for its own sake in terms of the transformation of information into evidence for use in advocacy, news, and courts, and because of its implications for the symbolic capital of credibility so vital to human rights organizations. These two characteristics of fields help us begin to understand the meeting point of produser information and professional fact-finders. They highlight that, to understand which produsers' information gets used by professional fact-finders, we need to understand both the information values that are part of the professional field's logic and the ability of the amateur produsers to meet these values – namely, the ability to provide what Gandy (1982) called information subsidies, or, in our case, verification subsidies.

A third reason why the concept of field is useful is because it allows us to contrast it with the non-field. Especially at the accidental end of the activist-accidental civilian witness spectrum, those providing digital information are a non-field. As Bottero and Crossley (2011) posit – and the fourth reason why using the concept of field is useful for understanding the professional-produser information interface – fields can be thought of as containing networks that allow for the diffusion of cultural capital. The human rights fact-finding field contains resources and institutions supporting knowledge exchange about verification strategies. In contrast, the absence of field means the absence of this type of network, so it is difficult for

cultural capital about verification subsidies to spread among accidental civilian witnesses. In the context of the volume problem of social media information and the verification literacy problem of digital civilian witnesses, verification subsidies, many provided by third parties, can support fact-finders and civilian witnesses with human and machine endeavors.

This lay of the land brings us back to the juxtaposition raised by the Syria Hero Boy video: the problem of verification versus the promise of pluralism. Pluralism, like veracity, is a core value in the human rights logic. Speaking truth to power is a major aim of human rights work, and this entails listening to the powerless, namely those otherwise likely to be drowned out by the actors they accuse of violations (Satterthwaite, 2013). The implications of digitally-enabled produsers for human rights pluralism are complex. On the one hand, ICTs have undoubtedly increased the pluralism of human rights information, especially from closed contexts such as Syria. On the other, this increase in the pluralism of information does not necessarily correspond with an increase in the pluralism of evidence. The same technological affordances making it easier for produsers to provide information can make professional verification more difficult. Since information is only acted upon once it becomes evidence, the volume and variety of civilian witnesses able to provide verification subsidies may be connected to the pluralism of access to the accountability mechanism of human rights (McPherson, 2014). One of the most analytically useful aspects of Gandy's information subsidy concept is that, as an economic metaphor, it highlights the connection between the ability to provide information subsidies and the possession of other forms of capital. The ability to provide verification subsidies relates to cultural capital in the form of digital literacy, as well as symbolic capital in the form of a digital footprint – which allows fact-finders to more easily corroborate the metadata of source identity. This is potentially problematic for at least two reasons. First, after

Bourdieu, can we assume that these forms of capital correspond to power and correlate to other forms of capital, such that the less powerful have more trouble producing verifiable information? Second, although the ability to provide verification subsidies can determine whether something is verifiable, and thus usable, it also determines ease of verification. Gandy posited that information consumers, in the context of finite resources, are more likely to consume cheaper information (1982); will verification ease determine the choice of human rights information in the context of limited time and manpower and a deluge of digital information? If the answers to these questions are yes, more powerful civilian witnesses may have greater access to the mechanisms of human rights accountability – despite the fact that it may be the less powerful civilian witnesses who have greater need.

This is where third party verification subsidies hold promise. Through supplanting some of the fact-finders' verification labor, and by prompting and automating the provision of metadata in civilian witness information, they make it easier for fact-finders to evaluate more digital information for evidence. The most promising verification subsidy may be the technological solution of the eyewitness mode in smartphone and social media platforms. Through providing verification technology and tactics at produsers' fingertips, this subsidy can mitigate the non-field problem of limited diffusion of cultural capital. In this case, then, automation, by taking human activity out of the process, may bring more humans into the product, and thus potentially increases the pluralism of human rights evidence. This verification subsidy works, however, because it replaces some of the technical work of verification. Machine verification subsidies, such as TweetCred, that try to address the subjective aspects of verification, are more dubious. Determining the presence of a fact, or the nature of truth, is a subjective judgment and thus, at least for the foreseeable future, a human process.

Finally, this analysis of where the amateur non-field of civilian witnesses meets the professional field of human rights fact-finders is useful for reflecting on field theory. As Lahire (2015) argued, focusing on fields – i.e. journalism, art, politics, human rights – as sites of study creates a focus on professional domains, and thus on the relatively elite and powerful individuals who participate in these social spaces. The rise of the digitally-enabled produser, so often an amateur and thus in a non-field, has rightfully made us refocus our attention – as Lahire urges we do – on the study of these less-powerful actors and on what happens when they interact with professional fields. Just as Bourdieu was so concerned with power relations in and across fields, our understanding of human rights civilian witnesses' differing abilities to provide verification subsidies impels us also to recognize and be concerned with power relations in non-fields.

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[ii] "Civilian" is preferable to "citizen," which is oft-used to refer to produsers but implies a relationship with the state – problematic in the case of those accusing this state of violating human rights. Furthermore, "witness" is also preferable to "journalist" as it both highlights the amateur and accidental nature of this activity as well as the intentionality of engendering a response (Allan, 2013; Joyce, 2013).