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**#BlackLivesMatter:
Critical Political Implications of Twitter Discourse in the Wake of George Floyd**

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Departmental Honors Thesis
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Political Science and Public Service

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Table of Contents

I.	Abstract.....	2
II.	Introduction.....	3
III.	Literature Review.....	6
	A. Twitter.....	7
	B. Governmental Use of Social Media.....	8
	C. Political Agenda Setting.....	10
	D. The Impact of Social Media on Offline Political Participation.....	11
	E. Police Brutality Overview.....	14
	F. Black Lives Matter Overview.....	16
	G. George Floyd.....	20
IV.	Theoretical Framework.....	22
V.	Methodology.....	28
	A. Research Method.....	28
	B. Research Questions.....	28
	C. Study Participants.....	29
	D. Tweet Selection.....	29
	E. Procedure.....	29
VI.	Findings.....	31
VII.	Discussion and Conclusion.....	40
VIII.	References.....	42
IX.	Appendix.....	49

Abstract:

As we move forward into a digitalized age of communication, social media becomes increasingly powerful with each passing day. Digital forms of interaction foster an active political discourse and influence the behavior of both the public and government officials. The freedom to deliver public statements at will has been effectively utilized by individuals, local activists, and representatives of the legislative branch to interact in discourse concerning current events, therefore furthering the mobilization of social media to shape the American public policy stage as a whole. As a result of the accessibility of the internet, social media has become the most effective way for individual citizens to communicate directly with their representatives. Due to their prominence and accessibility, these virtual platforms have become integral to communication and political engagement in the United States, specifically among those concerned with social change. My research answers the question of how the Black Lives Matter movement has been categorized into major themes through online discourse with regard to who begins narratives, how they spread, and what they become through the use of Twitter. A critical discourse analysis of such findings reveals the nature of online political discourse, how the use of social media impacts the setting of the American political agenda, and what the future of further digitalized political engagement may look like.

Introduction:

On May 25th of 2020, George Floyd was killed in broad daylight by the weight a police officer placed on him while kneeling on his neck. Video taken by bystanders shows Floyd repeatedly expressing his inability to breathe. Despite his cries, Officer Derek Chauvin did not move. Floyd's autopsy later revealed his cause of death to be "cardiopulmonary arrest complicating law enforcement subdual, restraint, and neck compression." Video footage of his death spread like wildfire across social media, resulting in a summer remembered largely for its protests.

Police brutality in America cannot be understood without first recognizing its connection to widespread systemic racism throughout the nation. As of June 2020, Floyd was not the first person to be killed by a police officer. Totals instead tallied up to 429 civilian lives taken during police shootings. Black men were found to be 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than their white counterparts. Despite remaining a minority in the U.S., more than a quarter of all victims of deadly police violence are black men (Schwartz, 2020). Many of these deaths occurred quietly – there was no mass mourning for everyone taken without justice. However, activist movements such as Black Lives Matter have vehemently fought to honor the lives of those lost to police brutality by demanding public recognition of these injustices which have for so long been normalized to the point of silence.

Victims of police brutality, such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner, did not quietly fade away specifically because of the power harnessed through public outrage and the power of activist groups to make people see the injustice to which they have been blind. George Floyd became a household name, not because of cable news reporters' dedication to recognizing organized injustice, but because the Black Lives Matter movement used their power to spread

his name so far it could not be ignored. This organizational power would be impossible to achieve without a network to enable the immediate spread of news. In the digital age, social media has become one of the strongest tools capable of creating political and social change. In the week following the killing of George Floyd, #BlackLivesMatter was tweeted an average of nearly 3.7 million times per day, with roughly 218,000 tweets containing the hashtag posted on May 26th alone (Anderson et al, 2020). In a country where police brutality has been passively accepted as a cultural norm incapable of being truly challenged for decades, George Floyd's name broke the sound barrier.

Online conversation kept George Floyd at the forefront of our national consciousness for the entirety of the summer of 2020. During the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, people connected with each other online before heading into the streets to protest the injustice of police violence within their own communities. Social networks, like Twitter, allowed people to come together in a time where everything felt as if it was falling apart. The discourse dominated media coverage for months, building up to recognition and conversations held by political figures as high-ranking as President Trump. Police brutality soared in importance as a national issue according to public opinion polls, as the percentage of Americans who considered deaths resulting from police brutality to be indicative of broader problems rose from 43% in 2014 to 69% in June of 2020 (Alemany, 2020). It is unquestionable that the use of social media has the power to significantly alter the topics prioritized on the public policy stage, in addition to shifting our national discourse. However, in acknowledging the influence of social media on our culture at large, we need to ask ourselves whose voices are driving the narrative.

Online communications are increasingly important in our society. In some ways, use of social media allows for further democratization of national discussions, as all users are given

equal opportunities to participate in political discourse. In the case of George Floyd, a name which went viral overnight, the individuals controlling the narrative concerning his life and death are important, as public perception is shaped at lightning-quick speeds online. While most individuals know the story of George Floyd's death, it was not told without political framing or influence. A gap in the literature exists in identifying the storytellers who shaped the narrative which launched one of the most significant shifts in political discussions in recent history.

Who were the most important people in the conversation about George Floyd? Did all participants have equal footing in establishing the popular narrative of his story? Does social media imply a deepened democracy in framing issues of social justice or do elected officials still hold the power? A critical discourse analysis of tweets posted the day following Floyd's death will allow for consideration of these questions, thus alluding to bigger questions concerning the future of our democracy as we move further into online circles of political conversations. Who holds the power?

Literature Review:

Previous research on identifying key players in online political discourse has been limited. While some research has been conducted considering Congressional use of Twitter, interaction between citizens and their legislators remains largely unanalyzed. While most legislators use social media, it is unclear whether their platforms set the tone for political discourse across all users, or if the opposite is true instead. By understanding who is setting the online political agenda and commanding conversation, the possibility of emerging citizen-led democratic leadership through social media may be discovered. Though some longitudinal studies have been conducted examining how Black Lives Matter discourse has developed over multiple years, the research field is lacking a look into how discourse changes over a much shorter, more concentrated period of time (Kumar & Pranesh, 2021). Online discourse moves fast-- many details and nuances in conversation are missed when research fails to look closely.

Current findings focus on discourse critique, ideology, and power (Unger et al., 2016). While this aspect of critical discourse analysis is powerful in understanding the “what” behind ideas, I am interested in examining the “how.” Previous discourse analyses of the online Black Lives Matter movement have been completed with the goal of determining which ideas are popularized, what the major themes are, and which ideas become important to the movement offline (Ince et al., 2017). To supplement this research, and other analyses made concerning generalized online political discourse, I have focused my research towards the goal of identifying whose ideas become most relevant and how the exchange of online communication makes this happen. In theory, all social media users have the opportunity to build their own popularity and platforms, resulting in a more democratized political sphere with the possibility of unelected

citizens leading the discourse they find most important, rather than responding to discourse coming from those already directly involved in the creation of legislation.

Twitter Background

This literature review discusses the standards and practices of Twitter use in the modern day. The site has risen in popularity in recent years, resulting in roughly one in every four American adults using the site to receive news, engage in conversations, and stay updated on political affairs (McClain et al, 2021). Relatedly, nearly 60% of users aged 18-29 say that social media is an important tool for staying informed regarding political and social issues and finding communities of others who share their views (Auxier, 2020a). Almost 50% of all adult Twitter users claim that the site has increased their understanding of current events (McClain et al, 2021). Additionally, the site is used to organize offline political engagement opportunities. Auxier found that over half of social media users ages 18-29 have used sites such as Twitter to search for political protests near them, use political hashtags, and encourage others to take political action regarding current events. This encouragement translates among all Twitter users, as one in three reported using the site for similar organizational tactics.

Among all Twitter users, McClain explains that roughly 20% of those under age 30 claim they visit the site too many times per day to tally. Twitter users who actively post on the site are disproportionate to those who simply scroll, as McClain found that the 25% most active users produce 97% of all posts on the site. The majority of these posts are unoriginal or Retweets and receive little to no engagement from other Twitter users. However, those who use the site to share political and social issues have a negative overall impact on the general population of Twitter users. In July of 2020, over half of U.S. adult social media users reported feeling burnt out by how much political discourse they had encountered on the sites (Anderson & Auxier,

2020). In the same study, it was found that Americans who frequent social media platforms were more likely to describe political discourse on the sites in negative terms in 2020 than they were in 2016. While one of the leading reasons reported for using Twitter is engagement in political discourse, many tire quickly of such content and become resentful of constant exposure. However, quick growth in the general population of Twitter users in the last decade reveals that such exhaustion is not impactful enough to keep more individuals from joining the site.

Governmental Use of Social Media

This review explores the literature that has been created concerning how elected figures in the U.S. legislative branch, such as Congress members, utilize their social media accounts to participate in online discourse. This is significant to the research project because critical discourse analysis rests on the understanding of power dynamics in conversations, including determining the social stances of those who make statements and how they impact what is stated. Twitter allows certain users, such as politicians, celebrities, and public figures, to differentiate their accounts from the majority through a process called verification. When applying for a verified account, users must provide evidence that they're frequently visible within the public eye. Several options for this process include attaching a news story about oneself, a Google Trends page showing research spikes about oneself, or general proof that others frequently discuss one's person online ("*Twitter verification requirements*"). When an account is verified, a blue checkmark is added onto the user's display name, which appears every time they create, engage with, or reply to a Tweet. The verification badge signals to other users that those who achieve this status are authentic, notable public figures who actively generate attention towards their accounts ("*Twitter verification requirements*"). Thus, verified users' participation in

political discourse may be read in a different tone than discourse generated by unverified accounts, as it carries a baseline of social clout.

It is important to establish that communication between Congress and their constituents has developed alongside social media (Straus et al., 2016). Social media platforms have enhanced the ability of Congress to properly represent their communities through an increase of direct, affordable, and open communication. In 2012, over 80% of Representatives and Senators were active on Twitter. The follower-followee networks of members of Congress on Twitter show a high level of partisan homogeneity, meaning that Congress members mostly interact with other members of their own political party. These partisan ties are deeply rooted, as shown by a 2016 study, in which 87% of ties in the Twitter follower-followee network existed among members of the same party, with higher percentages of partisan homogeneity among Republicans than Democrats (Peng et al., 2016). 88% of retweets were sourced from members of the same party, and 77% of mentions were from members of the same party, as well. Other determining factors of a Congress members' social media use center around their constituents and their own political ideologies. The more ideologically vocal a Senator is, the more frequently they will use Twitter. "Clout" has been found to be the most integral part of online Senate presence, which is attributed to the importance of building an individual, ideological brand. Social media is changing the meaning of "constituent," as members have no control over the reach of their social media postings, which puts more pressure on the member to maintain a nationalized character. This shift directly impacts the future of the Senate, as members are expected to hold national presence.

While most Congress members use social media in at least one way, it has been determined by the literature that all members use social media differently, depending on their

own background and goals. In a 2014 study by Marcinkowski and Metag, it was found that candidates did not use social media to gain votes, but rather to avoid losing them by appearing modern to young voters. While members of Congress use social media to different extents depending on their level of popularity, goals, and personal ideology, the literature concludes that the digital platforms hold immense power and can be extremely effective in determining factors such as re-election. Political personalisation is one of the most fundamental characteristics of contemporary politics, in addition to the simplification and accessibility of political discourse (Hernández-Santaolalla, 2020). However, political parties still remain more important than individual legislators, as parties are considered more stable and better predict voting patterns of constituents.

Political Agenda Setting

This review discusses the importance of political agenda setting in relation to establishing actual policy. The political agenda can be defined as a set of issues or political ideas established by ideological or political lobbyists, which is then upheld as topics for discussion or debate by government actors, such as the Congress (Salman et al, 2016). In addition, Salman argues that political media coverage shapes the agenda, as public discourse leads to the national prioritization of specific topics of discourse, such as police brutality. Similarly, 63% of Americans agree that social media is effective in influencing official policy decisions (Auxier & McClain, 2020). Having influence over this agenda is considered to be one of the most significant sources of political power, as this influence can easily be translated into material change upon the policy stage (Gilardi, 2022). This power has been further democratized through the integration of social media into political discourse channels.

Gilardi explains that the internet has led to the creation of “hybrid media systems,” as traditional sources of information, such as cable television, and non-traditional sources have equal opportunities to share their findings. Social media has completely transformed the nature of agenda-setting dynamics through further democratization of political communications. Nearly two-thirds of Americans agree that social media highlights social issues which may go unnoticed without the platforms and gives underrepresented groups the opportunity to voice their concerns (Auxier & McClain, 2020). Legislators, journalists, and citizens have the ability to engage in open discourse together, thus quickening the rate of political discourse cycles and resulting in public opinion gaining heavier weight in policy proposals. These interactions lack the formal regulations previously placed upon conversations between citizens and people in higher places of power. Relatedly, 50% of Americans agree that social media makes it easier to hold powerful figures accountable for their actions (Auxier & McClain, 2020). By expanding the number of potential actors capable of influencing the policy agenda and increasing levels of communication among elected officials and citizens, the policy stage is now heavily shaped through the use of social media. Specific social media platforms, such as Twitter, encourage these interactions due to linguistic posting styles. While not every U.S. citizen is active on Twitter, the majority of political candidates and elected officials are. Thus, these actors are incentivized to respond to requests for changes in political direction and policy promotions, as such integration is electorally favorable.

Impact of Social Media on Political Participation

This review is comprised of an analysis of the literature that has been produced concerning the impact of social media use on both online and offline political participation and engagement. The majority of the past decade's research on social media displays a positive

relationship between offline and online political participation. Nearly 80% of Americans polled in one study report believing that social media platforms are effective in creating sustained protest movements (Auxier & McClain, 2020). The use of social network sites to form connections between users and share mobilizing information is found largely responsible for this relationship (Halpern et al, 2017). Citizens who display an interest toward political conversation have been found to be significantly more likely to engage with political institutions, indicating that individuals who have a pre-existing interest in politics are most easily swayed into political participation (Skoric & Zhu, 2016). According to a Pew Research Center survey, generations who are more inclined to use social media, such as millennials and Generation Z, are beginning to outvote older generations, such as baby boomers, as they become eligible to vote as displayed in the 2018 midterm elections (Cilluffo & Fry, 2019). Similarly, the body of literature shows that political engagement on social media is a reliable and trustworthy predicting factor of political participation of US college students. This finding strengthens the overall ties between social media use and political participation, implying that the future of politics relies heavily on the internet as younger generations who are more active online grow older and become more civically engaged.

In a 2020 study, it was argued by Greijdanus that three types of communication on social media are responsible for boosting offline rates of political participation: individuals relating their personal experiences to social issues promoted by online activists, organizational activist communities, and sharing personal experiences with political struggle with those who do not share the same reality. In addition, online activism can encourage protest attendance simply through increased advertisement outreach by organizers. Thus, more protests are possible despite lacking formal organizational structures deemed necessary in the past, such as official unions.

Greijdanus argues that the ability to organize without such structures represents a new age of collective action, as the ability to organize has been further democratized and frequently runs from the bottom-up as shared through personal networks of communication. Minority groups who have gone underrepresented in previous mobilization actions can now voice their desires on an equal stage. This inclusion allows for pluralism within online activist spaces, as all users have similar opportunities to share their personal experiences and opinions that may have gone unheard otherwise. Such voices are essential in minority-led social movements, as they provide space to debate and evaluate political choices, raise awareness of social issues, and set the agenda for protests. Similarly, online discourse communities provide the opportunity for activists to not only plan protests, provide real-time coverage, and frame the goals of their movements, but to review completed actions, as well (Greijdanus et al, 2020).

Twitter users who engage in political discourse on the site have been proven to be more engaged in politics in general and more skeptical of trusting mainstream media than the average person. One study found that those particularly active in political discourse communities on Twitter report higher levels of offline civic engagement, as 34% claimed that they had attended a political protest, while over half polled had contacted an elected official during the previous year (Hughes, 2019). However, while active engagement on Twitter is positively associated with online political participation, exposure to disagreement on Twitter negatively correlates with this relationship (Bode & Dalrymple, 2016). Age is also negatively associated with participation, as it has been found that older users are less likely to participate than their younger counterparts. However, it has been found that this disparity is not impacted by social media itself – there are no discernible differences in social media’s impact on political engagement among different age groups (Auxier & McClain, 2020). In a study intended to examine how different patterns of use

prevalent on social media platforms are related to the likelihood of political participation in “real life,” it was suggested that informational uses of social media were reliable predictors of offline political participation during an election cycle (Skoric & Zhu, 2016). Online political expression in the form of personal complaint was not found to be intrinsically linked with offline participation, but discussion oriented posting on social media was strongly linked to offline participation, such as rally attendance. However, a gap in the research exists concerning whether social media mobilizes formerly passive citizens, and whether different social media platforms have an effect on this mobilization (Halpern et al, 2017).

Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, offer information that is not made available by traditional media sources and have transformed when and how the public becomes informed (Gainous & Wagner, 2013). Online communities have become accessible forums used to share information that lies outside the coverage of traditional media. Digital distribution of messages and pictures give rise to protest participation, which is why social media users seek out firsthand reports of protests that are typically not covered by traditional media. The abundance of political messages on social media mobilize users’ senses of personal and community involvement in social movements, which increases their likelihood of participation, (Gray-Hawkins, 2018). The relevance of political movements on social media may assist in drawing elite awareness, as information is easily accessible. However, social media may also make government suppression of political movements easier, as information on mass mobilizations is much more easily located than it has ever been before. While the digitalization of political action, such as protest movements, has negative effects, the positive effects, including increased participation and news coverage, are much more significant and will direct the future of political organization. Generally, the literature demonstrates that online and offline political

activism are becoming increasingly inseparable from one another, as discourse becomes further democratized and moves from exclusive activist circles to wider networks of social media users (Greijdanus et al, 2020). Similarly, the literature displays an agreement among scholars that online and offline political discourse and engagement are positively correlated and complementary to one another (Auxier, 2020b).

History of Police Brutality in the U.S.

This literature review comprises a brief overview of the history of police brutality in the United States, specifically with an understanding of racial implications. Police brutality directed against black citizens is a constant factor within American society, dating back to roots in slave patrols and later Jim Crow laws. Over half a century after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, “many minorities say that race relations between whites and minorities have either not changed or have gotten worse,” while nearly 70% of respondents in one study claim that the criminal justice system prioritizes white citizens (Embrick, 2015). Since the 1960s, police departments across the nation have received increasingly high amounts of funding, thus leading officers to become primary agents of societal control.

In more recent years, it has been found that black people are five times more likely to die from acts of police violence, which has been attributed to racially determined over policing (Angus & Crichlow, 2018). Despite remaining a racial minority in America, black people comprise the largest victim population of police brutality, regardless of factors such as being armed or unarmed when the incident occurs. Angus and Crichlow establish that “reasonable suspicion” for searches is a large contributor to elevated numbers of investigatory stops by police officers. These stops, which are performed frequently in black neighborhoods, then provide the opportunity for violence and elevated tensions.

In addition, Angus and Crichlow argue that qualified immunity is a leading factor behind the continuation of police brutality in recent decades. Qualified immunity policies make it increasingly difficult to indict police officers for the wrongful death of citizens who passed due to excessive force. Therefore, many incidents of police misconduct are dismissed without trial, even those caught on camera. Significantly, Officer Darren Wilson was not convicted for the highly controversial killing of Michael Brown as a result of qualified immunity protections. Perceived cases of injustice further contribute to escalating tensions between police and citizens, which in turn leads to increased rates of wrongful deaths among black Americans. These killings contributed significantly to the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement, formed in response to the belief that racially targeted acts of police brutality will not stop until black people are recognized as human beings.

Black Lives Matter Overview

The literature reveals that the Black Lives Matter movement has its roots in 2013. Following the police killing of Trayvon Martin, the phrase “black lives matter” first gained traction after a black activist posted it on Facebook in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, Trayvon’s shooter (Anderson et al, 2020). However, the phrase was not used as a popular hashtag until late 2014, following the acquittal of Darren Wilson, who shot and killed Michael Brown. The hashtag gained popularity in correlation with the rise of protests against police brutality in Ferguson, Missouri, becoming a signifier of the social movement itself (Freelon et al, 2016). Social media posts about Michael Brown were essential in propelling his story to the forefront of the national agenda, thus taking the Black Lives Matter movement along with it. Through the freedom of expression provided by social media, local activists were able to

spread their own interpretations of the events which led up to the killing of Brown. This contributed to a growing national discourse concerning police brutality of black citizens.

Following the death of Brown, other significant contributors to the rise in discussion of police brutality were the deaths of Eric Garner and Walter Scott. As a result of community leaders taking to social media to spread awareness against police brutality in these cases, social media sites such as Twitter became spaces of casual education concerning issues of injustice (Freelon et al, 2016). Black Lives Matter used these digital conversations to build the sentiment into a national movement for racial justice through systemic critiques, individual narratives, and criticism of traditional media coverage. Freelon argues that the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction online due to its unique physical and visual manifestations. In the age of the cell phone camera, police brutality has become an increasingly photographed and recorded act of violence. To put it simply, seeing is believing. By spreading these images alongside the names and faces of victims of police brutality, the movement appeals to the empathy of social media users. In addition, the frequency of these deaths contributes to the growth of the movement, as police brutality became an increasingly visible problem on social media, giving activists many occasions to discuss the cases with a broad audience.

Through the democratized nature of social media, activists used the opportunity to share the message of Black Lives Matter widely, without intervention from traditional news outlets. While sites such as Twitter aided these community leaders in pushing police brutality to the policy stage, the work was not automatic. Activists and concerned citizens transferred their online outrage into offline action: organizing community meetings, protests, and planning discussions with elected officials in order to shape an emotional response into a political movement (Freelon et al, 2016). This energy proved to be significant in tandem with the use of

social media and smartphones, encouraging cases of police brutality to remain prominent in both online and offline discourse circles. High visibility online was essential in propelling the movement into national consciousness and starting a national conversation concerning police misconduct (Freelon et al, 2016). By using social media and hashtags as a primary tool within the Black Lives Matter movement, it is now inseparable from its online origins despite sparking large offline protests (Anderson, 2016). Twitter has revealed that Black Lives Matter places twice among its list of the top three hashtags used to promote social issues within site history, with #Ferguson being the most used hashtag ever and #BlackLivesMatter placing third in 2016 (Anderson, 2016). While it is impossible to attribute the success of such activists entirely to their use of social media, it is essential to consider that sites such as Twitter were integral in shaping the movement as a whole, resulting in nationally recognized phrases, such as “I can’t breathe.”

Public opinion of the movement has grown in support since its beginnings in the mid-2010s. In 2016, it was reported that only four-in-ten Americans polled openly expressed support for Black Lives Matter, with only 18% reporting that they strongly supported the movement (Horowitz & Livingston, 2016). At the same time, one-in-five Americans expressed opposition to the movement, while 30% of those polled claimed they had never heard of Black Lives Matter. Significantly, those polled were divided across racial lines, with over 65% of black Americans polled expressing support for the movement in comparison to that offered by only 40% of white Americans. However, as more high-profile cases of police brutality occurred throughout the 2010s, support for Black Lives Matter increased overall. The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter increased in significance as well, being used almost 30 million times between the first post in 2013 and 2018, often spiking in reaction to current events and instances of police brutality caught on camera (Auxier, 2020b). Black Lives Matter maintained its stance

as a movement on social media throughout the decade, never fully fading from political discourse despite lulls and spikes. This consistency can be partially accredited to the knowledge that conversations concerning race are omnipresent on social media sites such as Twitter, though they do not always focus on acts of police brutality (Auxier, 2020b). However, this continuation of racial conversations allows discussion of Black Lives Matter to ease back into a position of prominence within the political discourse. The largest Twitter conversations concerning race have been found to occur the day following a major event, such as a death resulting from police brutality or an instance of a racial hate crime (Anderson, 2016).

2020 witnessed a massive spike in online discussion of the Black Lives Matter movement, following the racial controversies of Amy Cooper and George Floyd. Cooper was recorded phoning law enforcement on an unarmed black man birdwatching in the park, generating Twitter discourse about unwarranted police interference and the propensity of white women to generate racial conflict which could potentially end in police brutality (Bromwich, 2021). This conflict occurred on May 25th, 2020, the same day George Floyd died of excessive force in police custody. The juxtaposition of these events resulted in an unprecedented rate of discourse concerning Black Lives Matter on social media and generating large offline protests. As witnessed in response to previous cases of police brutality, support for the movement grew. In June of 2020, two-thirds of U.S. adults polled expressed support for the movement, with nearly 40% of those clarifying strong support (Parker et al, 2020). Similarly, 87% of black Americans polled expressed support for Black Lives Matter, as compared to just 65% in 2016 (Thomas & Horowitz, 2020). In June, over 51% of black Americans reported sharing information related to racial equality on social media within the previous month. However, as seen in previous cases of

burnout regarding social media activism, support for Black Lives Matter slowly decreased in the following months.

By September of 2020, only 55% of Americans polled expressed support for the Black Lives Matter, down 12% in the months since June (Thomas & Horowitz, 2020). Strong supporters had dissipated, as well, with the rates dropping from 38% in June to 29% in September. Following the death of George Floyd, several high-profile cases of police brutality rose to national attention: the deaths of Jacob Blake and Breonna Taylor. Amid days of constant protests across the nation, support for the movement slowly decreased alongside negative rhetoric from then President Trump, who frequently described activists within the movement as “thugs” (Bump, 2020). Similarly, elected officials discussed Black Lives Matter frequently on sites such as Twitter. Overall, 45% of the 116th Congress have taken to social media to discuss the movement, with first mentions occurring in January of 2015. Roughly half of these members brought Black Lives Matter into their political agendas on social media in 2020, mentioning the terms for the first time within the three weeks following Floyd’s death (Shah & Widjaya, 2020). While these mentions sustained the movement momentarily, other research has found that despite the popularity of calls for political change within only discourse following high-profile cases of police brutality, these sentiments do not last (Nguyen et al, 2021). Following these spikes in advocacy against injustice, slow returns back to “average” levels of racially discriminatory language and phrases observed in Tweets suggests that popular online discourse alone does not garner enough power to result in material political change or permanent shifts in national ideological attitudes (Nguyen et al, 2021).

The Death of George Floyd

On May 25th of 2020, George Floyd died due to neck compression as a result of police use of force (Griffith, 2021). The killing occurred after Floyd was stopped by police after being accused of using a counterfeit bill. His death was recorded on a cellphone and quickly spread across social media, alongside the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Floyd's death resulted in mass protests across the United States for an extended period of time, stretching across the summer of 2020 all the way into 2021. When polled, a majority of Americans understood the reasoning behind these protests to be both a reaction to Floyd's death, as well as frustration over long-term issues of racial inequality (Parker et al, 2020). Tensions between black people and police, as well as general concern over racism, were largely cited as large contributors to the protest movement, as well. The death of George Floyd also sparked discourse concerning racism and inequality in America, with seven-in-ten U.S. adults reporting that they had discussed racial equality among their friends and family within the month of June 2020 (Parker et al, 2020). Concern about police brutality and Floyd was expressed largely on Twitter, with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter gaining popularity once again. Between May 26th and June 7th of 2020, #BlackLivesMatter was used nearly 50 million times on Twitter, averaging at almost 3.7 million mentions per day (Anderson et al, 2020). On May 26th, the day following Floyd's death, there were 218,000 tweets containing #BlackLivesMatter posted alone, spreading conversation about police brutality across the globe. The prevalence of discourse concerning Black Lives Matter in response to the death of George Floyd was unprecedented, cementing police brutality on the political agenda.

Theoretical Framework

In the literature review of this thesis, I discussed the topics which contributed to the social context surrounding the death of George Floyd. Subjects reviewed including the prominence of Twitter use among Americans, the history of police brutality in America, and the birth of the Black Lives Matter are essential background in understanding the importance of the killing of George Floyd, as well as the aftermath of discourse and political protest which followed. My research asks which themes were most prominent in the Twitter discourse concerning police brutality and Black Lives Matter on May 26th of 2020, the day following Floyd's death, as well as which speakers in the conversation were most impactful on its direction. To best answer these questions, I have approached my research through the conceptual framework of critical discourse analysis.

Overview of CDA

Critical discourse analysis was developed in the late 1970s by Roger Fowler, an academic linguist (Qianbo, 2016). Fowler observed that discourse analysis failed to consider the power of language, including its social and political contexts. Critical discourse analysis emerged from researchers within the field of Critical Linguistics who were unsatisfied with the framework's lack of acknowledgement for social context (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). Academics, such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk are significant shapers of critical discourse analysis, all contributing individual work to further construct the conceptual framework (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Wodak and Meyer argue that critical discourse analysis considers all discourse a product of historical events. Without looking at such context, discourse analysis fails to consider the factors which lead to the creation of a piece of text and thus shaped it.

Discourse has been defined as “the flow of knowledge – and/or all societal knowledge stored – throughout all time” (Jäger, 1993 and 1999). Discourse is both an individual and collective action, all of which informs society (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Language is inherently intertwined with ideology and realities of social power and should be analyzed with these factors in mind, according to critical discourse analysis (Qianbo, 2016). People do not experience the world free of bias and are incapable of producing bias-free conversations, so the social and historical context of discourse is equally important to accurate analysis as what is actually said or written. When completing a critical discourse analysis, the researcher must not remain “neutral,” but cognizant of the social, political, and economic factors which have led to the creation of the work being examined (Mullet, 2018). As particular ideas and phrases become popular or frequently repeated in discourse, they gain power. Additionally, discourse can be spread by people who exist in positions of power, such as elected officials, thus propelling specific ideas into societal structures and institutions. Therefore, critical discourse analysis is the most appropriate conceptual framework of analysis for the research conducted within this paper, as it focuses on dynamics of historical oppression and modern reactions within online discourse communities.

Methodological Characteristics

While critical discourse analysis seeks to analyze language in terms of power and social context, there is no single set of agreed upon methodology (Mullet, 2018). Due to the interdisciplinary nature of discourse, the framework instead requires procedures and techniques to be selected based upon their relevance to the field in which the discourse is being analyzed. However, general approaches to conducting critical discourse analyses do exist. Most are problem focused, selecting one aspect of injustice or oppression within a society to act as the

basis of research (Van Dijk, 1993). Mullet proposes general steps to completing a critical discourse analysis, including: the gathering of discourse, cleaning the discourse, exploring the social context it was produced within, identifying the general themes of the discourse, analyzing external and internal relationships within the discourse, and interpreting what is discovered. Data is analyzed with the understanding that power relationships are both found within and perpetuated by discourse itself, and thus must be understood within the specific context in which the discourse occurred. Similarly, the researcher must acknowledge that no use of language is neutral and is instead representative of socially accepted norms (Mullet, 2018). By doing so, the researcher may complete an analysis which is interpretive and explanatory, regardless of discipline (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Above any particular approach to gathering data and completing an analysis is the understanding that all discourse is representative of social power, in that it records the way power is distributed and discussed, as well as displays expressions of power within communities (Mullet, 2018).

The rise of social media has contributed to changes within the way that critical discourse analysis is conducted. Previously, studies focused primarily on texts produced by political institutions, traditional media outlets, and official press releases from elected officials. Social media has democratized the ability to participate in political discourse in wide, highly populated spaces. Specifically, social media has allowed minorities and oppressed populations to voice their experiences, ideologies, and complaints on a stage which they previously did not have access to. In response, critical discourse analysis may now be performed on smaller, less formal pieces of discourse – such as those produced on sites such as Twitter (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). As the relationship between writer and reader has been permanently altered through social media, critical discourse analyses should now focus primarily on the social context within which

discourse is produced, rather than the political power of the speaker. This shift benefits my research, as it first seeks to identify the major ideas expressed within Twitter discourse concerning an act of injustice, and then secondly seeks to identify the power dynamics observable within the discourse. A potential limitation of this framework is that the analysis relies entirely on the researcher's interpretation of the discourse at hand, which allows opportunity for the researcher to manipulate expressions into those which appeal to their own political agenda, rather than those of the speakers (Mullet, 2018).

Theory

The theory of critical discourse analysis is most clearly derived from a combination of historical, social, and linguistic critiques. Specifically, Mullet clarifies that the framework is constructed from overlapping theories such as neo-Marxist cultural theory, Moscovici's social representation theory, and Foucault's theories of poststructural discourse. Common factors within the theoretical perspectives combined to form critical discourse analysis are the consideration of injustice and the power of language, as well as an importance assigned to historical and social contexts. In addition, critical discourse analysis employs the use of theoretical triangulation. Theoretical triangulation can be defined as the practice of going beyond what is on the page to fully grasp the context of the discourse, often on four levels: the immediate language, the causal relationship between discourse and texts, the social context of the discourse, and the broader historical context of the discourse (Mullet, 2018). As a result, critical discourse analysis results from a long history of pre-existing methodologies of discourse and social analyses, which is then further supported by full examination of contexts. Power, ideology, and history make up the theoretical body of critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

When applied, these theories showcase hidden political and personal power ideologies within a text. This “asymmetric use of language” both causes and resolidifies social inequalities (Qianbo, 2016). As a result, understanding the full context of discourse alongside its hidden ideologies reveals the power dynamics within discourse, which are then clarified through the theoretical basis of critical discourse analysis. However, social media has altered these relationships, as well. It has become more difficult to identify who in the conversation is responsible for shaping discourse, as algorithms promote and hide content on their own. Thus, the discourse which may appear on the Twitter timeline could be served to individuals who the algorithm believes will either approve of the represented sentiments or who will choose to engage with the content due to disagreement. In both scenarios, the algorithm is a shaper of discourse itself – identifying which arguments to promote based on a profit model (Bouvier & Machin, 2018).

Key Concepts

The primary key to completing a critical discourse analysis is perception and interpretation of power within discourse (Mullet, 2018). Mullet argues that power has the ability to influence knowledge, understandings, shared ideologies, cultural norms, and personal values. Therefore, analysis of this power is essential to performing critical discourse analysis. Power can appear in many different forms among discourse, as discourse can take on widely different forms, such as written dialogues, visual images, and non-verbal communication (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Similarly, Wodak and Meyer argue that the concept that power is transmitted through representations and reproductions of the status quo is key to critical discourse analysis, rather than accepting any discourse as simply neutral in tone and meaning.

A key concept in the methodology of critical discourse analysis is attention to detail. Meaning may be found in small, relatively unnoticeable fragments within discourse, such as word order, active or passive voice, and choice of specific words (Luke, 1997). In examining online discourse, these observations can translate into observance of including pictures, gifs, and emojis (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). As argued by Bouvier, the most important objective in critical discourse analysis is the full dissemination of discourse, including which ideas, values, and identities they promote. However, in discourse moderated by social media algorithms, it is also important to consider the underlying impacts of organization and popularity of specific posts.

In critically examining discourse on Twitter, it is key to understand that a user's previous interactions on the site feeds information to a decisive algorithm which chooses to promote or hide certain content from their profile. Though discourse is democratized by the platform's provision of equal footing for users, Twitter is not free from shaping discourse through bias and may result in echo chambers (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). While discourse strands, defined by Wodak and Meyer as "thematically uniform discourse processes" occur offline, these discourse strands can morph into ideological groupthink on social media (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Even posts by news outlets which seem to be entirely informational on the surface are promoted based on the commodification of information. Bouvier and Machin argue that social media does not merely produce large quantities of texts, but text aimed at achieving "particular ends." The migration to online circles of political discourse thus represents a change in sociopolitical culture and the rise of neoliberal ideology in the U.S. (Bouvier & Machin, 2018).

Methodology:**Research Method**

This thesis utilizes a critical discourse analysis as the research method, in addition to an extensive literature review detailing the general sociopolitical context of 2020. A five-step process was used in completing this study: conducting an initial literature review, gathering the data, compressing the data, extracting and sorting the data, and completing a final critical discourse analysis of the data. This methodology was chosen due to the nature of the research at hand: an analysis of Tweets with acknowledgement given to social and political context.

Research Questions

In this thesis, I seek to analyze public Tweets posted on the day following George Floyd's death, May 26th, 2020. The Tweets were selected based on content included, as well as date of original publication. The research questions that drive my analysis are listed below:

RQ1: What were the major themes in the political discourse on Twitter in the wake of George Floyd's death?

RQ2: How was the online discourse concerning George Floyd's death shaped by participants of varying status, including elected officials and those with verified accounts?

The goal of this study is to contribute to modern research concerning digital political activism by expanding upon the themes and narratives present within Tweets posted following a high-profile case of police brutality. This thesis uses critical discourse analysis to explore the nature of online political discourse, which frequently correlates with offline political behaviors, such as protest movements. The method selected for this research enables the researcher to fully examine the

content of the Tweets within the social context in which they were originally written, which allows for analysis inclusive of history, modern politics, and social power dynamics.

Study Participants

This thesis utilizes written statements released in the public domain. The participants of this study are those who wrote the Tweets initially gathered for research. As all data was collected through public posts, no approval from the institutional review board was necessary.

Tweet Selection

In gathering Tweets to conduct this study, I utilized Twitter's advanced search engine, as well as an outside data gathering service, ScrapeHero. For this thesis, public Tweets posted in the English language on May 26th of 2020 containing the following phrases were selected: "George Floyd" and "#BlackLivesMatter." The time period and criteria were selected as a microcosm of the digital Black Lives Matter movement because Floyd's death was the catalyst for the summer of protests seen in 2020, as supporters began flooding the streets of Minneapolis the same day. While there are some limitations in only examining one day of Tweets, this data set is the best fit for the scope of this project.

Procedure

An initial literature review was conducted in 2020. Throughout several months in 2021, new topics were added to the literature review as deemed necessary by the researcher. Included sources were gathered through the UTC Library, Google Scholar, and Sage Journals. Twitter data was then collected on October 21st, 2021. I utilized the Twitter advanced search engine to specify the time and date of publication of the Tweets gathered, as well as the inclusion of any specific terminology. I utilized ScrapeHero to create a scraper, which then gathered and sorted the Tweets specified earlier into several downloadable documents. The process took

approximately one hour. A total of 3,270 Tweets were collected. Data scraped from the Tweets includes the Twitter handle of the poster, the content of the Tweet, the replies, retweets, and favorites of the Tweet, the post date and timestamp, and the URL of the original content. The gathered Tweets were cleaned for spam, advertisements, irrelevant content, and Tweets lacking full context. I then utilized a random number generator to select 350 numbers between 1 and 3,270. Using this list, 350 Tweets were selected in a simple random sample for analysis in this project. A simple random sample was used to select the Tweets included in this study because “every individual has an equal chance of being selected in the sample from the population” (Acharya et al., 2013). After cleaning the data for Tweets deemed nonsensical, unrelated, or lacking enough context for proper analysis, a total of 335 Tweets were included in a critical discourse analysis.

Following the data collection and initial cut, the remaining Tweets were analyzed for major themes, rates of interaction, and status of posters (publicly elected officials, verified, or unverified accounts). A coding scheme was developed to aid in the quality of analysis, the development of themes and subthemes, and organization of the data. The codebook created for my study allowed me to code Tweets regarding the Black Lives Matter movement into several different thematic categories. Additionally, I coded the Tweets in regards to whether the poster was an elected official, a community organization, or a verified account. After coding the Tweets using Google Sheets, subthemes were created for organizing the data. These subthemes assisted me in identifying patterns, categories, and relationships expressed in the posts, and thus aided me in my goal of examining prevalent online discourse. The research project was then organized into three different sections: a literature review, a critical discourse analysis of specified Twitter content, and a discussion of the political implications of such findings.

Findings:

A critical discourse analysis of Tweets posted within the wake of George Floyd reveals the emergence of eleven primary themes: (1) informational, (2) elaboration on the phrase “black lives matter,” (3) police brutality, (4) pushes for political change, (5) racial injustice, (6) emotional responses, (7) posts mentioning the greater social context of BLM, (8) condolences for Floyd, (9) dissatisfaction with handling of Floyd’s death, (10) speaking up about police brutality, and (11) general attitudes about policing. All posts considered within this project were made by a total of 313 individual accounts, with nine of those posting multiple times. Of the 335 posts considered, 217 were written in multiple sentences, 107 were one sentence, and 11 were sentence fragments. 255 Tweets, 76.1%, did not include any additional media, such as a video, photos, or gifs.

A further analysis of the top 15% of Tweets which received the highest level of interaction in the form of likes within the dataset reveals that interaction earned was not proportionate to the population of accounts found within the dataset. Of the top 15% of Tweets, roughly 50% (26 posts) were written by individuals with verified accounts, though verified accounts only accounted for 5.75% of all accounts considered within this thesis. In addition, two accounts affiliated with Congress were located within the data set: one Congressional member and one Congressional candidate. Both were represented within the top 15% of Tweets, despite accounting for only 0.64% of the total population considered. The most represented account within the top 15% of Tweets was @AttorneyCrump, a civil rights attorney closely associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. Within the top 15% of Tweets, the most popular themes were racial injustice, police brutality, and dissatisfaction with the handling of Floyd’s death.

The general sociopolitical context of 2020 was detectable within the Tweets considered. However, some topics were more frequently discussed in the context of Floyd’s death than others. 24 Tweets contained references to Amy Cooper, while only three Tweets in the dataset referenced the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, specific references to common mantras within the Black Lives Matter movement were common, with “I can’t breathe,” referenced in 58 Tweets and “say their names,” referenced in 29 Tweets. 33 accounts were brought into the discourse through direct mention in conversation, with the most frequent reason for tagging being a demand for the arrest of the officers involved in Floyd’s death, followed by a general request to comment. An individual critical linguistic analysis of each theme considered within the discourse has been included for further exploration of the findings.

Minneapolis Public Officials (14)	General Political Figures (12)	Celebrities (4)	News Media (3)
@MinneapolisPD (7)	@JoeBiden (3)	@cthagod	@nbc
@Jacob_Frey (2)	@RepSwalwell (2)	@chelseahandler	@NBCNews
@MayorFrey (2)	@BernieSanders	@TATIANNANOW	@CBSNews
@HennepinAtty (2)	@KamalaHarris	@kerrywashington	
@GovTimWalz	@DNC		
	@amyklobuchar		
	@IlhanMN		
	@realDonaldTrump		
	@AttorneyCrump		

Figure: Accounts directly tagged to engage in political discourse sorted by type.

Theme 1: Informational

Of the 335 Tweets examined in the critical discourse analysis of this thesis, twelve were coded as informational (3.58%). These Tweets were identified due to their compositions as limited, short messages relaying information with little explicit opinion revealed. Among Tweets in this theme, “police brutality” was not directly named, but described. Authors instead relayed information about the death of George Floyd through visual depictions, such as:

“Man seen pleading ‘I cannot breathe’ as a Minneapolis police officer put his knee on the man's neck for several minutes died Monday night.”

While readers can interpret the situation described as an excessive use of force through context clues, it is not expressly stated and written without bold emotional sway. Alternatively, Tweets coded within this category contained live information concerning active protests:

Calvary Church is a block away from the George Floyd protest site. A member is putting free masks on a nearby fence line for anyone to grab. The church also set up a water station due to the heat.

Tweets in this category refrained from use of language in the first and second person perspectives. As such, Informational Tweets maintained a sense of detachment from their readers, as typical of traditional media coverage.

Theme 2: Black Lives Matter

Analysis of the body of Tweets revealed “Black Lives Matter” as a theme expressed emotionally, rather than simply used as a hashtag. Of the 335 Tweets examined, 23 were coded as containing the sentiment of Black Lives Matter (6.87%). Unlike those in the Informational category, Tweets in the theme of Black Lives Matter were typically written in the first person perspective. This allows for a closeness to the reader that detached writing styles do not, and thus

does not express feelings of superiority. Instead, the Tweets use “we” and “us” frequently, depicting a sense of community. By expressing frustrations with injustice and racism, authors of Tweets within this category hinted at the emotional backdrop behind Black Lives Matter:

how many more black lives do we have to lose for people to recognize this pattern. there is no “all lives matter” until black lives do. there is no “justice & liberty for all” until that applies to black lives. RIP George Floyd.

The Tweets within this category were frequently dual-coded within the Emotional Response theme.

Theme 3: Police Brutality

Of the 335 Tweets analyzed, nearly 51% were coded as thematic of police brutality. Counted within this theme were 170 Tweets total, which were subsequently broken into five subthemes. Among these subthemes, those which appeared together most frequently were: A, Explicit Mention of Police Brutality and D, Use of Violent Terminology such as “murder.” The second most frequently used combination was: C. No Expectation of Officer Punishment and D. The prevalence of these combinations depicts a shared understanding among authors of Tweets falling within this category of the death of George Floyd as violent, unjustifiable, and likely unpunishable. Descriptive phrases such as “fucking disgusting” and use of all-capital letters were common within this theme. In addition, Tweets were frequently dual-coded within the Emotional Response, Racial Injustice, and Social Context themes. Writers frequently utilized a first-person perspective, informal writing style in this category. Tweets frequently connected the death of Floyd to other high-profile victims of police brutality, like Eric Garner.

Theme 4: Push for Political Change

Within the Push for Political Change theme were 63 of the 335 Tweets (18.81%) included in this study. Of those Tweets, the majority fell into subcategory B, General Plea for Change. These Tweets were typically dual-coded alongside Emotional Response Tweets, as well as Social Context Tweets. A first-person perspective was common, as writers wrote general questions, such as:

what more will be done? What justice will there be for George Floyd, whose life was stolen from him?

Among those in the Specific Action subtheme, posts included concrete, definitive actions for political or social change. An example of this is the date, time, and location for an in-person political protest. Specific critiques of the Democratic and Republican parties only occurred a total of three times.

Theme 5: Racial Injustice

Nearly 45% of the total Tweets analyzed contained the theme of Racial Injustice. With 148 total posts, the most common subtheme was Mistreatment of Black People, followed by Mentions of “racist” or “racism,” and the subtheme Racist America. Tweets within this theme were frequently dual-coded with the Social Context theme, as many writers compared and contrasted the killing of George Floyd alongside other police brutality victims. Similarly, authors in this theme compared Floyd’s death to unequal police treatment of white people, such as Amy Cooper. Power was frequently analyzed within this theme on the personal, racial, systemic, and national levels. In addition, this theme accounted for many posts containing historical and social analysis:

Policing had roots in slave patrols; squadrons made up of white volunteers empowered to use vigilante tactics to enforce laws related to slavery. Centuries later & absolutely NOTHING has changed. We need a revolution now.

Tweets using the first and second-person perspective within this subtheme were politically charged, alluding to general societal upheaval.

Theme 6: Emotional Response

124 of the 335 total Tweets (37.01%) were coded in the Emotional Response theme. Of these posts, a majority fell into the Anger and Outrage subtheme, with the second largest subtheme being Tragic and Heartbroken. Tweets within this theme frequently utilized the first-person perspective, as well as emojis and emoticons. The posts were emotionally expressive in nature, using fully capitalized words, excessive punctuation, and stylized typing. This theme was frequently dual-coded among the Social Context theme, as posts often included at least one recognizable phrase born of the Black Lives Matter movement, such as “I can’t breathe” or “say their names.” Tweets typically focused on themes of victimhood, injustice, and emotional exhaustion:

We say your name #GeorgeFloyd. We are outraged. We are grieving. We are numb. We are tired. But we say your name. And renew our vow to fight for a nation that does not crush black lives. To my black sisters, brothers, siblings, you are not alone. #SolidarityIs #BlackLivesMatter

Generally, Tweets within this category understood power as an overarching boundary held by political institutions, rather than something harnessed by American citizens.

Theme 7: Social Context

Tweets falling within the Social Context theme included recurring phrases and themes within the Black Lives Matter movement and content which described the greater context of 2020. Among the 122 Tweets within this theme (36.42%), “say their names” was referenced 29 times, while “I can’t breathe” was referenced 58 times. Similarly, Colin Kaepernick and the act of kneeling as protest was a prominent topic. Tweets in this thematic category commonly included multiple mantras in one post, most frequently in the form of hashtags. In addition, photos included in this category typically visually juxtaposed Kaepernick’s kneel with the death of Floyd.

We can’t kneel for the National Anthem but they can kneel on our necks...

#BlackLivesMatter #SayHisName #GeorgeFloyd.

Tweets commonly used active voice, first-person sentence structures and provided a basis of united community through words such as “we” and “our.”

Theme 8: Condolences for Floyd

Among the 335 Tweets utilized in this thesis, 49 (14.63%) contained condolences written to Floyd and his family. Most commonly, Tweets were coded in the subthemes of Rest in Peace and Rest in Power. Tweets in this category were brief, typically consisting of one short sentence. However, these posts frequently contained emoticons and hashtags. The posts display an appeal to empathy, reference prayer, and address the Floyd family directly.

RIP George Floyd 🕊️ ✨ #BlackLivesMatter.

This theme was frequently dual-coded alongside the Emotional Response theme.

Theme 9: Dissatisfaction with Current Outcome

30.7% of the total Tweets included in this critical discourse analysis referenced dissatisfaction with a perceived lack of justice in unfolding events. Of 103 Tweets within this

category, 31 included demands for the arrest of the police involved in Floyd's killing, while 55 specifically demanded justice for Floyd – 7 Tweets demanded both.

The four Minneapolis cops getting fired isn't nearly enough. They must face criminal charges for the murder of George Floyd. #Nojustice #BlackLivesMatter

This theme was frequently dual-coded with the Anger and Outrage subtheme. Tone within this category is decisive, confident, and direct. Power is represented as transferable in this theme, as an arrest for a perceived wrong is equated to justice.

Theme 10: Speaking Up About Police Brutality

36 total posts (10.74%) were included in the Speaking Up About Police Brutality theme. The majority of posts called for readers to use their voices to fight against injustice, while a smaller proportion advocated specifically for white people to use their privilege to achieve societal change. Several writers called upon celebrities to use their platforms to spread the message of Black Lives Matter, while a larger number advocated that those who spread information about George Floyd on social media should not include the graphic video of his passing. The tone of Tweets within this category was instructional, often giving specific directions to the intended audience.

#GeorgeFloyd was MURDERED. If you watch that vid and think otherwise- you are the problem. #BlackLivesMatter and white people need to speak up and not just stay silent in the background of this all. I am OUTRAGED. Those police officers are murderers. RIP



Theme 11: Attitudes About Policing

Of the 335 Tweets reviewed, 23 (6.87%) expressed one of two prominent attitudes about policing: reform or ACAB. Police reform implies retraining of police officers, accountability for

past wrongs, and reimagining the job of policing. In contrast, ACAB ideology expresses the belief that policing is too corrupt for reform and must be abandoned completely. Among those included in this theme, the majority expressed the view of the latter.

COP ARE NOT COPS !!! They Are Racist Enforcers Protected By The State And Judges

We All Know It Deep Down. #GeorgeFloyd #ICantBreathe #BlackLivesMatter

Tone within this theme differed largely based on which ideology the writer endorsed. However, most Tweets were written from a first-person narrative, in which the author implies through action verbs and collective pronouns that policing is a malleable institution, receptive to communal power.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Who creates the conversation and what is the conversation? In a critical discourse analysis of Tweets posted on May 26th, 2020 concerning George Floyd in context of the Black Lives Matter movement, among the most prevalent themes were police brutality, racial injustice, and pushes for political change. These themes appeared in real life, too, as seen through the creation of legislation such as the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020, which sought to limit the controversial power of qualified immunity, as well as establish a national framework to limit racial profiling in policing (“George Floyd Justice,” 2020). Public opinion polls from 2020 reveal that following the death of Floyd, over three quarters of Americans believed racial discrimination in the United States to be a significant issue (Galston, 2020). Though the Black Lives Matter movement rose to national attention through online activism efforts, it has garnered concrete change in the form of official legislation, a shift in the public policy stage, and has a high level of influence on public opinion concerning race relations in the United States.

It was found in the critical discourse analysis portion of this thesis that individuals with verified accounts are most likely to garner high levels of interaction within online political communications. Among these verified accounts are Congressional members, public figures, and traditional news media organizations. While online communities of political discourse, such as those found on Twitter, allow for further democratization of interaction between citizens and their representatives, those recognized as public figures or elected officials still monopolize the conversations by achieving the highest levels of interaction. It is their ideas which are most supported, interacted with, and discussed, though they represent the minority of Twitter accounts. Notably, the account most represented within the top 15% of Tweets with the highest levels of interaction belongs to civil rights attorney, Ben Crump. Crump is recognized as an integral part

of the Black Lives Matter movement for his representation of the families of high-profile victims of police brutality, such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, and Daunte Wright (Evans, 2021). In acknowledging the established connection between online political discourse and offline political engagement, it should be unsurprising that Crump was later selected as the litigator responsible for representing the family of George Floyd. While online political discourse is not the backbone of American society, it certainly shapes it.

Social media gives minority and underrepresented groups the ability to share their experiences, opinions, and political action ideas with a massive network of individuals. In sharing these thoughts, personal hardship can morph into a political movement when people who have experienced similar, systemic struggles connect with one another. The Black Lives Matter movement grew into an internationally recognized social and political wave for change because local activists in Ferguson, Missouri took to Facebook and Twitter to express their heartache and outrage in the wake of the police killing of Michael Brown. The use of social media in the refusal to let victims of police brutality die without recognition of the injustice done to them has fundamentally altered the way many Americans think about race. Online political discourse has remarkable offline implications, whether causing dramatic shifts in public opinion, resulting in commentary made by the president of the United States, or being written into official legislation. Though political discourse concerning police brutality ebbs and flows, spiking when social media is used to tell the story of another victim and falling when people become quiet again, it is a constant on the political agenda. Regardless of whether it's expressed through a Tweet or a chant at a protest, the message is clear: black lives matter.

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Appendix A: Code Book

Final Code Book

Total scraped: N=3270

Total coded after initial cleaning (350 of overall sample selected in simple random sample):

N=335

Total unrelated/nonsensical/lacking context: N=15

Unit of analysis: Presence of theme within Tweet. Themes and subthemes are not mutually exclusive.

PURPLE: Major theme

GREEN: Subtheme of major theme located immediately above.

Inclusion of video, photo, or gif: video (3), photo (2), gif (1), none included (0)

Length of Tweet: multiple sentences (3), complete sentence (2), incomplete sentence (1)

Poster Clout: elected official/political candidate (3), community organization (2), verified (1), unverified (0)

Theme	Definition	Example
<p>1: Informational N= 12 N(verified)= 5 N(unverified)= 7 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet is informational and aims to inform or update readers on ongoing events.</p>	<p>We have been informed that the man killed by Minneapolis police was named George Floyd. #JusticeForFloyd #icantbreathe https://t.co/76e3UA9JAK</p>
<p>2: Black Lives Matter N= 23 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 21 N(community org)= 2 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet mentions “Black Lives Matter” or “#BlackLivesMatter,” and expands upon the meaning behind the phrase.</p>	<p>I’ll continue to profess that #BlackLivesMatter. I’ll continue to repent for my role in the dismissal of black lives. I’ll continue until the vast majority of US institutions and systems cease to deny that reality. #GeorgeFloyd</p>
<p>3: Police Brutality N= 171 N(verified)= 10 N(unverified)= N(community org)= 8 N(elected official/political</p>	<p>Tweet discusses police brutality.</p>	<p>#GeorgeFloyd is the latest victim of police brutality. May he rest in paradise. 💔 - The criminal justice system continually oppresses black Americans. He did not pass</p>

candidate)= 1		away from a “medical incident” HE WAS MURDERED. #JusticeForFloyd #blacklivesmatter https://t.co/98Vo4rD6hK
3A Subtheme: No Explicit Mention of Police Brutality N= 52 N(verified)= 3 N(unverified)= 48 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet does not mention police brutality through direct terms: “police brutality,” “brutal,” “violence,” “excessive force,” “use of force,” or similar language. Tweet instead alludes to violence or injustice.	George Floyd is another name we lost today from police brutality toward blacks. It feels like it happens everyday now... I’m sick and tired of it. Every police force in America needs better training and we as Americans need to hold people accountable. #BlackLivesMatter
3B Subtheme: Complacency N= 12 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 12 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet expresses frustration with perceived complacency of police in colleague’s acts of brutality.	That man really sat there and let his fellow officer kill George Floyd #BlackLivesMatter
3C Subtheme: No Expectation of Officer Punishment N= 13 N(verified)= 1 N(unverified)= 12 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet expresses an expectation that officers who commit acts of police brutality will receive no acceptable or fair amount of punishment.	@SincereOfDXB And checkout the cop’s face. He couldn’t care less that he’s killing #GeorgeFloyd. And you know why he couldn’t care less? Because he knows he will get away with whatever abomination he performs on a black man. They nearly always do. #BlackLivesMatter?
3D Subtheme: Use of Violent Terminology N= 119 N(verified)= 6 N(unverified)= 112 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1	Tweet mentions police brutality through violence terms, specifically in reference to Floyd’s death: “murder,” “killing” “strangling,” “choking,” or similar language.	#GeorgeFloyd lynched like a dog in the streets. While his killers look upon him as superior. #2020 #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/xvkUrga2AS

<p>3E Subtheme: Passive Voice N= 8 N(verified)= 1 N(unverified)= 0 N(community org)= 7 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet discusses Floyd's death with passive terms rather than violent language.</p>	<p>Again... His name was #GeorgeFloyd His last words, "I can't breathe..." as a police officer had his knee on his neck before he died. This isn't conspiracy. This isn't political. This isn't race baiting. This is INJUSTICE. #BlackLivesMatter</p>
<p>4: Push for Political Change N= 62 N(verified)= 6 N(unverified)= 38 N(community org)= 2 N(elected official/political candidate)= 3</p>	<p>Tweet expresses desire for political or societal change, fighting for justice, or political revolution.</p>	<p>I'm angry and extremely sad about the brutal murder of George Floyd. We must not let this go until we get justice. Also, yes, we need to advocate real change that #BlackLivesMatter everywhere in the world. Let's not get tired of fighting until we win! #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd https://t.co/uvOhFtUzf8</p>
<p>4A Subtheme: Specific Action N= 15 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 11 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet specifically calls upon elected officials to engage in political action regarding the death of George Floyd or police brutality at large. Alternatively, Tweet includes specific actions to take to achieve perceived political change or justice, such as inclusion of phone numbers to call or Senators to contact.</p>	<p>This NEW PHOTO clearly shows FOUR OFFICERS involved in George Floyd's murder. Call Minneapolis Mayor @Jacob_Frey (612-673-2100) and demand IMMEDIATE TERMINATION of ALL FOUR OFFICERS for their role in this horrible act!! #JusticeForFloyd #ICantBreathe #GeorgeFloyd #SayHisName https://t.co/3NuaF11gdb</p>
<p>4B Subtheme: General Plea N= 41 N(verified)= 4 N(unverified)= 35 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet expresses desire for political or societal change, but does not include specific action to take or potential solutions.</p>	<p>Speechless. We as a people deserve better than this. My heart breaks again watching the murder of #GeorgeFloyd in broad daylight. Damn...we need a revolution. #BlackLivesMatter</p>

<p>4C Subtheme: Criticism of Political Parties N= 3 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 2 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet includes a direct criticism of a political party or high-ranking official in a political party.</p>	<p>This is what a systemically racist response looks like. If you've seen the video you can see #GeorgeFloyd was murdered, but Biden is vetting a woman who is afraid of upsetting the white nationalist police unions. When will #BlackLivesMatter in America? https://t.co/qUStlfoPtV</p>
<p>5: Racial Injustice N= 157 N(verified)= 4 N(unverified)= 150 N(community org)= 2 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet explicitly mentions "injustice," describes lack of justice in police brutality situations, or lack of justice in the death of George Floyd.</p>	<p>Again... His name was #GeorgeFloyd His last words, "I can't breathe..." as a police officer had his knee on his neck before he died. This isn't conspiracy. This isn't political. This isn't race baiting. This is INJUSTICE. #BlackLivesMatter</p>
<p>5A Subtheme: White Supremacy N= 5 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 3 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet directly mentions the term "white supremacy."</p>	<p>#BlackLivesMatter #JusticeforGeorgeFloyd #GeorgeFloyd #BlackJustice White supremacists interpret "Land of opportunities" wrongly.</p>
<p>5B Subtheme: Mistreatment of Black People N= 57 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 54 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet discusses racism and mentions racist mistreatment of black people specifically.</p>	<p>this innocent BLACK man. George Floyd, a BLACK man who didn't deserve death. 2020 has been a wild ride, but these events shouldn't be occurring. not in 2020, not ever. it's disgusting and this country needs to change asap #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/Gk6QrrM8cB</p>
<p>5C Subtheme: Racist America N= 12</p>	<p>Tweet references racism in America as a whole, particularly with references to</p>	<p>America what on earth is going on with you! #GeorgeFloyd . I am so so</p>

<p>N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 12 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>history, national ideas, and/or modern race relations.</p>	<p>tired, this could never be the land of the free. #BlackLivesMatter</p>
<p>5D Subtheme: Systemic Racism N= 9 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 7 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet specifically mentions the term “systemic racism” or a variation of it.</p>	<p>This is what a systemically racist response looks like. If you've seen the video you can see #GeorgeFloyd was murdered, but Biden is vetting a woman who is afraid of upsetting the white nationalist police unions. When will #BlackLivesMatter in America? https://t.co/qUStlfoPtV</p>
<p>5E Subtheme: Mentions of “racist” or “racism” N= 34 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 30 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet explicitly mentions the term “racist” or “racism.”</p>	<p>That racist cop just committed murder and did not even blink an eye. Six years later after Eric Garner's death and George Floyd is repeating his same words, "I can't breathe." I feel sick. My heart goes out to his family and friends. #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/Hx41zqQvx9</p>
<p>6: Emotional Response N= 124 N(verified)= 4 N(unverified)= 120 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet expresses an emotional response to police brutality, the death of George Floyd, and/or the Black Lives Matter movement. Tweet is based on personal feelings.</p>	<p>I am outraged and heartbroken that this happened (and keeps happening) in my city #georgefloyd #justiceforfloyd #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/Bn0jGYRcxz</p>
<p>6A Subtheme: Tragic and Heartbroken N= 41 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 39 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet expresses feelings of sadness, heartbreak, and/or general tragedy in response to police brutality, the death of George Floyd, and/or the Black Lives Matter movement. Tweet is based on</p>	<p>That George Floyd video brought tears to my eyes, can't even stomach things like that #BlackLivesMatter</p>

candidate)= 0	personal feelings.	
<p>6B Subtheme: Anger and Outrage</p> <p>N= 61 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 61 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet expresses feelings of anger and/or outrage in response to police brutality, the death of George Floyd, and/or the Black Lives Matter movement. Tweet is based on personal feelings.</p>	<p>The violence and utter disregard for life last night in south Minneapolis is another horrific example of racism's deadly impact in communities of color. I'm angry and sick at the loss of George Floyd's life. Now and forever #BlackLivesMatter</p>
<p>6C Subtheme: Personal Experience</p> <p>N= 4 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 4 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet connects police brutality, the death of George Floyd, and/or the Black Lives Matter movement to a personal experience of the poster. Tweet is based on personal feelings and shared experiences of relatability.</p>	<p>Sharing this after a chat with a friend who has been deeply traumatised by this event & many others like it. These injustices can have a profound impact on how black people take part in their daily lives. Justice 4 George Floyd https://t.co/39UMClvTw3 @Change #blacklivesmatter</p>
<p>6D Subtheme: Mixed Emotions</p> <p>N= 18 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 16 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet expresses personal feelings of sadness, anger and/or outrage simultaneously.</p>	<p>I'm angry and extremely sad about the brutal murder of George Floyd. We must not let this go until we get justice. Also, yes, we need to advocate real change that #BlackLivesMatter everywhere in the world. Let's not get tired of fighting until we win! #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd https://t.co/uvOhFtUzf8</p>
<p>7: Social Context of BLM</p> <p>N= 122 N(verified)= 10 N(unverified)= 110 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 1</p>	<p>Tweet references the larger social context of 2020, including. Examples include police brutality as a recurring problem, other victims of police brutality, general mantras of the Black Lives Matter movement, President Trump, Amy Cooper, Colin</p>	<p>The everyday silence to or acceptance of racism, White supremacy and systemic injustice in all it forms led to the murder of Breonna Taylor, Ahmad Arbery and George Floyd. It's a hard truth to swallow but it's that simple folks.</p>

	Kaepernick or kneeling, and/or the Covid-19 pandemic.	#BlackLivesMatter
7A Subtheme: Say Their Names N= 29 N(verified)= 4 N(unverified)= 25 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)=0	Tweet references a variation of “say their names” or “say his name,” a phrase often used to connect victims of police brutality to one another in order to highlight a systemic issue.	Say their name! #GeorgeFloyd #AhmaudArbery #SandraBland #SeanReed #TamirRice #EricGarner #OscarGrant #MichaelBrown #WalterScott #FreddieGray #DanteParker Remember all of them! #BlackLivesMatter 👊❤️
7B Subtheme: I Can’t Breathe N= 58 N(verified)= 5 N(unverified)= 53 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet references a variation of “I can’t breathe” or references an inability to breathe in other terminology, a phrase often used to connect victims of police brutality to one another in order to highlight a systemic issue.	“I cannot breath.” Again. A handcuffed black man represents more danger than armed white man shouting at the police. #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/KVXaYsqEgl
7C Subtheme: Colin Kaepernick and Kneeling N= 8 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 8 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet references Colin Kaepernick, the act of politicized kneeling, or both.	Again. WTF, America. This is why @kaepernick7 kneeled. This is racist bullshit. This is inhumane. #georgefloyd #sayhisname #blacklivesmatter 🤪 by shirien.createes https://t.co/s6mj6S9vHT
8: Condolences for Floyd N= 49 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 45 N(community org)= 2 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet expresses general condolences for the death of George Floyd.	Rest In Peace George Floyd #BlackLivesMatter I’m so sorry this country has failed you and all your brothers and sisters it’s so fucked up
8A Subtheme: Rest in Peace N= 29 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 29 N(community org)= 0	Tweet expresses wishes for George Floyd to rest in peace.	Rest in peace with the angels now 😭😭😭🌈❤️💔 #icantbreathe #BlackLivesMatter #GeorgeFloyd

N(elected official/political candidate)= 0		https://t.co/ChsGTjCGwS
8B Subtheme: Rest in Power N= 8 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 7 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet expresses wishes for George Floyd to rest in power.	Rest in power George Floyd 👊 #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/2WI5fdkKh7
8C Subtheme: Appeal to Floyd Family N= 8 N(verified)= 2 N(unverified)= 5 N(community org)= 1 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet expresses well wishes and extends empathy to the family and close friends of George Floyd.	👤 #GeorgeFloyd is his name. Sending love and light to his family during this incredibly difficult time. 😞 #ICantBreathe #BlackLivesMatter #YouCantSilenceUs https://t.co/3oKma0GbKf https://t.co/k7QaKMvOW0
9: Dissatisfaction with Current Outcome N= 102 N(verified)= 6 N(unverified)= 93 N(community org)= 3 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0	Tweet displays dissatisfaction with lack of justice as events were occurring in real time.	An FBI investigation will not be enough. This officer Derek Chauvin must be arrested and charged immediately. The family of #GeorgeFloyd deserves swift justice. #ThisStopsToday #ICantBreathe #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd #BlackLivesMatter https://t.co/YsHnicsnp7
9A Subtheme: Calls for Arrest N= 31 N(verified)= 5 N(unverified)= 24 N(community org)=2 N(elected official/political candidate)=0	Tweet expresses desire for the arrest of the officers who killed George Floyd, demands they be held accountable for their role in his death.	The officers have been fired...we demand their arrest and prosecution immediately! #BlackLivesMatter #WeAreDoneDying #GeorgeFloyd
9B Subtheme: Justice for Floyd N= 55 N(verified)= 4 N(unverified)= 47	Tweet expresses general desire to achieve justice for George Floyd, methods are not specified.	The whole damn system is guilty as hell. Tear it down. I pray for justice. #GeorgeFloyd #BlackLivesMatter

<p>N(community org)=4 N(elected official/political candidate)=0</p>		
<p>10: Speaking Up About Police Brutality N= 36 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 36 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet calls people to use their voices to speak out against police brutality, white supremacy, and/or racism.</p>	<p>#JusticeForFloyd #BlackLivesMatter #GeorgeFloyd There is no more being a bystander or simply disagreeing with racism anymore... we must be anti racist and pro black. No sitting in silence. There needs to be an active push against the aggressor until we are all equal</p>
<p>10A Subtheme: Call to White People N= 6 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 6 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet calls white people to use their racial privilege and voices to speak out against police brutality, white supremacy, and/or racism.</p>	<p>#BlackLivesMatter #GeorgeFloyd was murdered in broad daylight. May his soul fly high. We white people need to speak out as allies. Privilege comes with responsibility, so point out the bullshit when you see it. #icantbreathe I hope those responsible are haunted by these words</p>
<p>10B Subtheme: Call to Celebrities N= 3 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 3 N(community org)=0 N(elected official/political candidate)=0</p>	<p>Tweet expresses desire for celebrities to use their platforms to advocate against police brutality and injustice.</p>	<p>I hope these celebs with big or small platforms speak on #GeorgeFloyd ! Use your voice and be loud and clear ! #BlackLivesMatter</p>
<p>10C Subtheme: Speak Up Without Video N=5 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)=5 N(community org)=0 N(elected official/political candidate)=0</p>	<p>Tweet expresses desire for people to speak out against police brutality without sharing graphic videos of victims' deaths.</p>	<p>i don't know how to word this but it's so possible to bring awareness to police brutality without constantly flooding people's timelines with videos of black people being murdered for existing. it's dehumanising and exhausting #blacklivesmatter</p>

		#GeorgeFloyd
<p>11: Attitudes About Policing N= 23 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 23 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet displays general attitude regarding policing as a whole: possibility or impossibility of reform, love or hate towards officers, and/or policing as an institution.</p>	<p>This is not enough! Being fired is not enough! The systematic oppression has to end, and for that, firing officers is not enough! #BlackLivesMatter #GeorgeFloyd #PoliceBrutality https://t.co/NgayxZrrLv</p>
<p>11A Subtheme: Reform N= 9 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 9 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet explicitly mentions reform, accountability, or increased training measures in regard to policing. Seeks redesign of policing, rather than abolition. Tweet refers to police through</p>	<p>Why do we let racist people with nothing more than a GED be police officers??? There has to be a smarter, more comprehensive way to train, screen, and hire these people. #BlackLivesMatter #GeorgeFloyd #ICantBreathe #MURDERED</p>
<p>11B Subtheme: ACAB N= 14 N(verified)= 0 N(unverified)= 14 N(community org)= 0 N(elected official/political candidate)= 0</p>	<p>Tweet explicitly mentions “ACAB” (All Cops Are Bastards), explicitly denounces policing or reform measures, or expresses general distaste for police. Tweet refers to police through informal/traditionally disrespectful terms, such as “cop” or “pig.”</p>	<p>Fuck cops. Fuck any cop who doesn't understand that sentiment at this point. And if your daddy is a cop, fuck him too. #georgefloyd #BlackLivesMatter #acab https://t.co/RpOocwoBY8</p>

Appendix B: Twitter Accounts Sorted by Social Impact Status, Not Including Unverified

Accounts

Congressional Members/Candidates	Verified Accounts	News Media Accounts	Community Organizations
@JoaquinCastrotx	@AttorneyCrump (3)	@CBSMornings	@MNPPCampaign (3)
@isiah4congress	@CornellWBrooks (2)	@NBCNews	@NYjusticeleague (2)
	@AGellison	@NLGnews	
	@DLamontJenkins		
	@JoyAnnReid		
	@CriticalRace		
	@Jeff_Wagner4		
	@Jamie_Margolin		
	@Phil_Lewis_		
	@keithboykin		
	@DrIbram		
	@doctor_imani		
	@AynRandPaulRyan		
	@RevDrBarber		
	@valariekaur		
	@EB_Hirsch		
	@JotakaEaddy		

Appendix C: Recurring Accounts Within the 313 Total Accounts Considered

Recurring Accounts Within the Dataset
@AttorneyCrump (3) V
@MNPPCampaign (3)
@OTDMorningBrief (3)
@RagnaGarcia (3)
@CornellWBrooks (2) V
@arootams (2)
@bakaresimbiat (2)
@AlokozayMeetra (2)
@JoeSmithSDK (2)