The Power Behind #BlackLivesMatter in 140 Characters or Less: A Rhetorical Analysis

of #BlackLivesMatter Tweets in July 2016

by

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ABSTRACT

On July 5, 2016, Alton Sterling was fatally shot by police officers in Baton Rouge, LA. On July 6, 2016, Philando Castile met the same fate. In retaliation of the events, on July 7, 2016, Micah Xavier Johnson, a Black male, opened fire on police officers in Dallas, Texas killing five officers and injuring nine others. Considering the events that occurred over the 3-day span, this study rhetorically analyzes 100 tweets that addresses the events. This study used Sysomos, a social media management and analytics software, to collect 100 tweets over an 8-day span between July 5 through July 12, 2016. The tweets collected involved the keywords: Black Lives Matter, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Dallas Police Officer(s). This study uses Leland Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism with a Critical Race Theory lens to address the tweets. Results suggest that during the time frame analyzed, the movement was in its second life cycle phase, the rhetorical crisis, and as the data suggests, altered between both a pro-movement and an anti-movement classification. Results further indicated that the use of social media, specifically with the use of hashtags, within the movement created a lack of direction and identity for the movement. This study examined the use of hashtags, emojis, and images attached to tweets to suggest how Twitter users create narratives and use emotions to address their feelings and opinions towards the events that have occurred.

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This thesis is dedicated to those who have supported me since day one of Graduate School. To my parents, for their unending encouragement, love, and support; to my friends, who spent countless nights discussing the topic, no matter their personal beliefs; to Connie Mckee for helping me find my home in education; and to Bailey, my dog, for keeping my lap warm through it all. The author is so incredibly blessed to have such an amazing support system behind her.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On February 19, 2017, Instagram user ElephantJournal posted a picture of himself holding a sign that read "It's 2017, I should be advocating for honey bees by now, not fighting for BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS" (ElephantJournal, 2017). The message that Instagram user ElephantJournal is preaching sums up the Black Lives Matter Movement's advocacy. The official Black Lives Matter Movement website explains that the Black Lives Matter Movement is a chapter-based national organization that is attempting to validate the life of the Black individual by "(re)building the Black liberation movement" (Black Lives Matter, 2017). In refutation of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the public protested by creating alternate movements like "All Lives Matter" or "Blue Lives Matter" in regards to the confrontation present between Black individuals and law enforcement.

The clash between the three movements was depicted in July of 2016 when the lives of seven individuals, two Black males and five police officers, were lost. On July 5, 2016, Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old Black male was shot by a police officer in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Fausset, Perez-Pena, & Robertson, 2016). On July 6, 2016, Philando Castile, a 32-year-old Black male was shot by a police officer in Falcon Heights,

Minnesota (Peralta, 2016). Both shootings were filmed by witnesses and further posted on social media sites that quickly gained millions of views and national attention. In response to the shootings, the Black Lives Matter Movement responded by protesting police departments in various cities across the nation. On July 7, 2016, a crowd of protesters associated with the Black Lives Matter Movement took to the streets of Dallas, Texas, to march in protest of the deaths of both Sterling and Castile. During the protest, 25-year-old veteran, Micah Xavier Johnson of Mesquite, Texas, opened fire from atop a building aiming to kill as many White police officers as possible (Fernandez, Perez-Pena, & Bromwich, 2016). Johnson killed five officers and injured seven separate officers as well as two civilians before being shot and killed by an officer (Fernandez, Perez-Pena, & Bromwich, 2016).

After each attack, social media users took to their keyboards to voice their opinions on the issue. Responses to the attacks varied resulting in various arguments on Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. In the end, the attacks, their live broadcast, and the protesting response from the American public depict a vicious feud that easily demonstrates that the work that Martin Luther King Jr. began is far from complete. This study analyzed the Black Lives Matter Movement through the publics' response to the deaths of Castile, Sterling, and the Dallas Police Officers through tweets conducted by the public containing the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Chapter One provides a brief description of the artifact that is being analyzed rhetorically. Following the description of the data collected is a brief history of the use of social media advocacy, the power behind a hashtag, and the Black Lives Matter Movement. These sections are followed by the theoretical framework and the method in which I use to analyze the #BlackLivesMatter

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campaign regarding the dates of July 5 through July 12, 2016. The dates chosen for **this** study were chosen specifically to include responses surrounding both the deaths of Sterling and Castile, as well as the protest and attack in Dallas, Texas.

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to analyze the tweets collected from Twitter in response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castille, and the Dallas attack using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. This study examined the tweets to depict how social movement activism has increased and become more advanced since the creation of the social media platform. The deaths of Sterling and Castile were broadcast live on Facebook before going viral on Twitter and Tumblr. This medium has allowed the public an up close and personal view of the events that occurred without national media bias overlapping it. The responses from social media users referencing the deaths are a raw depiction of their feelings towards the issue. As the author of this thesis, I feel connected to this topic. However, while I may feel connected, I have very little connection to the Black community, law enforcement, or racial discrimination. As the author of this study, I am a White woman in her 20's. I have never been racially discriminated against, nor have I ever felt fear when approached by a police officer. I do however, feel a connection with those who do. The connection I feel has been brought upon by being a part of the Forensics community. I have been a member of the Forensics community for over eight years. In this community, the Black Lives Matter campaign flourishes through the arguments that individuals of color address to the public. As a competitor, and as a judge

in Forensics, I have been exposed to stories, arguments, and even personal narratives depicting the racial discrimination that Black individuals have been exposed too. It is through these personal narratives that I feel a deep connection to the person who has been a victim to racial discrimination. It is born out of this connection that I feel the need to use my education to highlight the issues that plague society in regards to race. To depict the feelings presented in these tweets, this study paired critical race theory with social movement criticism in a rhetorical analysis of a sample of 100 tweets that use the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. This study took into consideration the effect that the events had upon the individual's social media response to the situation.

Description of the Artifact

From July 5 through July 12, 2016, seven innocent individuals lost their lives, including two citizens and five police officers (Karimi, 2016). In response to the deaths, Twitter users took to their keyboards to share their opinions, anger, and sense of loss surrounding Castile's and Sterlings' deaths, as well as support for the protests that soon followed. The events that occurred within the time frame were mixed in nature, resulting in varying degrees of response from users. During the eight-day span, more than 3 million tweets were tweeted using the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. There was a varying range of emotion expressed among the tweets. Twitter slowly became more than a place to express witty thoughts and jokes, but rather an outlet to express true emotions in 140 characters or less.

The Black Lives Matter Movement was created on July 13, 2013, by Alicia Garza, and her two friends Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors. The movement, #BlackLivesMatter, was created as a call to action for Black people to take action after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was placed on trial for his own murder (BlackLivesMatter, 2017). The movement was created as a response to the anti-Black racism that the sisters believe saturates society. The Black Lives Matter Movement claims to be an ideological and political intervention in a society where Black lives are "systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (Black Lives Matter, 2017, p. 3). Springing from the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, The Black Lives Matter Movement was created through social media before garnering support from various artists, designers, and individuals of fame who not only offered their voice in support, but also their emotional support. The movement quickly morphed from its social media presence into the streets after the death of Michael Brown in 2014. This research project was guided by my interest in the Black Lives Matter Movement and the response it has generated through social media.

Social Media Advocacy

Social media is thriving globally with seven in ten Americans connecting utilizing social media to connect with others, surf the news, and share information ("Social Networking Use," 2017). Social movements cover a broad range of topics, justification, and even events, often flooding the front lines of main stream media. It is no wonder that there has been an increase in individuals using social media to advocate for what they believe. While social movement rhetoric has been studied for years through entire journal

issues and countless textbooks, the use of social media presents a new dimension for scholars to dive into (Burgchardt, 2010).

Not only is social media providing an outlet for entertainment, news information, and a sense of community for those who have miles distancing them from their loved ones, but social media is being utilized as a tool for political protest in all corners of the world. For instance, on December 17, 2010, 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi of Tunisia, a college graduate working as a vegetable vendor, committed suicide by lighting himself on fire after police officers stole produce from his stand. Bouazizi's suicide triggered a revolution against the Tunisian government (Fox, 2011). The revolution that occurred found its fuel through the use of social media. In 2011, Twitter erupted with the hashtag #Jan25 in support of the protest against Egypt's dictator, Hosni Mubarak (Fox, 2011). The protest, being conducted through Twitter, caused authorities in Egypt to block the social networking site, however, the citizens then moved to sharing their horrific images and experiences on Flickr and YouTube. Authorities eventually blocked both citizens from using the internet and SMS attempting to stop the revolt. The protest lasted until February 11, 2011, when Mubarak finally agreed to step down (Fox, 2011). The protests in both Egypt and Tunisia were successful for those revolting against the government.

In 2011, while social media use was driving political change in Tunisia and Egypt, the United States experienced its first social media driven protest with #OccupyWallStreet. On July 13 2011, a blog post was created urging people to #OccupyWallStreet in response to the economic inequality occurring worldwide

(Berkowitz, 2016). The hashtag was slow to build interest, but in September of 2011, the

hashtag quickly took Twitter by storm, urging people to gather together to protest in

Zuccotti Park, located in New York City's Wall Street financial district. By September

22, the protest reached a critical stage when other hashtags began to appear like

#OccupyDenver and #OccupySD (Berkowitz, 2016). The protest spread nationwide

before slowly losing its hashtag relevancy; however, rather than dying off completely, the

hashtag efforts that brought together so many people, only encouraged the groups to

continue their protesting efforts in a different fashion; like the fast food worker revolt in

2012, or the demand for higher pay in numerous U.S. cities in 2014 (Levitin, 2015).

Facebook and Twitter played a significant role in Tunisia, Egypt, and even the United

States in 2011. These "Twitter Revolutions" began as an idea, before morphing into a

central location to build a group of mass size, all of whom were advocating for the same

concept of social change (Chalmers & Shotton, 2016, p. 374). Social media activism and

advocacy has since grown in ability to reach the largest amount of people possible at one

moment for a certain cause.

Advocacy can be described as an act of "publicly representing an individual,

organization, or idea with the object of persuading targeted audiences to look favorably

on, or accept the point of view of the individual, organization, or the idea" (Edgett, 2002,

p. 1). Edgett (2002) suggests that the relationship between advocacy and the art of

persuasion is a tale as old as time. Ozedemir (2012) furthers that advocacy is a "tool for

generating public support for particular topics" (p. 24). Social media links well with the

function of advocacy because not only does it allow for a broad base for the organization or idea to work with, but it allows for the recruitment of a large amount of people. Advocates are able to set the stage for protests that gain nationwide attention due to the massive amount of members that join the cause.

Protesting has occurred in forms such as marches, sit ins, and even the act of burning objects to revolt against political agendas since the beginning of time. Leighty, D'Silva, and Johns (2016) explain that social movement leaders have been utilizing social media platforms to garner support and to maintain coherent communication with their citizens. Through analyzing tweets from the time that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in India came into power (2012) to the time that they resigned from politics (2014), Leighty et al. (2016) examined the political views of the Indian common people. It was determined that social media, specifically Twitter in this instance, is "a moving force in the political upheaveal" (Leighty et al., 2016, p. 35). Results from the study indicated that the AAP utilized Twitter to not only recruit support for its cause, but it also allowed the citizens to pose questions and concerns that they had for the movement (Leighty et al., 2016). The idea that social media gives the public a voice was echoed in the #OccupyNigeria protest in January 2012 (Egbunike & Olorunnisola, 2015). Egbunike and Olorunnisola (2015) compared social media and newspapers' framing of the protest through a content analysis that identified the similarities and differences in the frames that both social media and the newspapers used in covering the protest. Protests built upon a social media platform give voice to the voiceless in a way that allows for stronger

advocacy from those who would prefer to not physically stand in the streets. Rather than separating the masses based upon their social class, ability to donate, or the color of their skin, social media closes the gap between individuals by blanketing their differences and allowing for a stronger sense of togetherness. Ozedemir (2012) argues that the main strength behind online advocacy is the ability to allow everyone a voice. Ozedemir (2012) explains that through social media use, the masses can realize that their contributions, no matter the size or depth, can have "a rapid effect and outcome" on the situation (p. 27). Whether it be a post on Facebook detailing their opinion, a Tweet using the protests hashtag, or even a share, their voice can reach others, persuading them to join the fight, which is only building upon the attention for the protest, and/or cause. Social media advocacy can build communities of mass size to fight for a common idea or act of social change.

The Power of the Hashtag

Hashtags have been used in social media since its birth. Social media is also present in advocacy programs. Hashtags evoke a sense of emotion and a need to act and change within the individual (Yang, 2016). The hashtags used in forms of activism or protest contain verbs that express a powerful sense of action and force to be driven by the individual posting or tweeting them. People who use hashtags use them to make people feel as if they can be apart of the issue they are discussing. Hashtags offer a resolution of change.

Hashtags are build in a way that allows users to express their ideals as simply as possible. (Crandall & Cunningham, 2016). Crandall and Cunningham (2016) suggest that hashtags are the key to getting the younger generation to connect with cultural and political issues. Hashtags keep those who use social media involved in current political and social issues across the globe. Hashtags allow those utilizing hashtags an outlet to express themselves when they feel as if their voice hardly matters. Hashtags allow the user to feel like they are giving a piece of themselves to the topic (Crandall & Cunningham, 2016). Hashtags are simple, but yet make an impact in the issue they are addressing.

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter campaign is a relatively new campaign. What started as a simple phrase, defining the need for a movement for social change, quickly morphed into a guiding light that highlights the complex issues surrounding racial discrimination. The Black Lives Matter campaign began after the death of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin who was killed on February 26, 2012 (Lebron, 2017). The Black Lives Matter movement was created as a call to action in response to the death of Martin.

The Black Lives Matter movement is present in academia, specifically in the classroom (Perry, 2016). Authors utilize the Black Lives Matter movement to depict how race is being utilized in the classroom. The Black Lives Matter movement is also examined in the way the students analyze the issue of race through their own lives (Perry, 2016). The movement has the opportunity to evolve the way students analyze race in

Social media advocacy and activism in the form of hashtags has become common in use by political group and social movement to organize support for their cause ("Social Networking Use," 2016). Today's hashtag, could easily be leading tomorrow's protest. It is through examining the influence that the hashtag "#BlackLivesMatter" has in fueling the social media responses to the deaths of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and the Police Officers killed in the Dallas, Texas attack that provides insight to how hashtags build on a sense of community, as well as help to promote, and enact, social and political change in the United States for Black individuals. My research focuses on answering the following research questions:

RQ$_1$: From July 5, 2016 through July 12, 2016, how did the tweets pertaining to the Black Lives Matter Movement compares to those pertaining to Police Officers?

RQ$_2$: What perceptions about police brutality against Black Americans are reflected by Twitter users who link their tweets to the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter?

Theoretical Framework

social movement criticism was founded in 1952 by Leland Griffin when he discovered that in contrast to analyzing the oration of one individual in a neo-classical manner, it is possible to rhetorically analyze the oration of multiple individuals that revolve around one situation or phenomenon. Griffin constructed three assumptions based upon social movement criticism. First, Griffin theorizes that social movements consist of two general types; pro and anti (Burgchardt, 2010). Pro movements argue for the "creation or acceptance of an idea of institution", while anti movements are created to

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"arouse public opinion to the destruction or rejection of an existing institution or idea"

(Burgchardt, 2010, p. 395). Second, Griffin found that pro rhetoricians work towards

establishing an ideal, while anti rhetoricians move to destroy the institution at hand.

Finally, Griffin found that there are three stages to a social movement: inception,

rhetorical crisis (development), and consummation. While Griffin dictates the

movement's classification of movement, he furthers that the "main criterion for judging

social movement discourse is in analyzing the movement's effectiveness" (Burgchardt,

2010, p. 395). To justify a movements ability to conduct change, scholars must judge the

movement through its formation.

Miller (1999) argues that social movements don't necessarily end on a negative

note, but rather end in one of four ways: repression, co-optation, success, or failure.

Regarding the repression, social movements will begin to decline because agents of

authority have utilized measures (often violent) to bring control to the movement, often in

hopes to destroy it. When a social movement ends in co-optation, the decline is due to a

leader failing to uphold the values of the social movement. When a social movement

declines due to success or failure, the movement either successfully accomplished fixing

the grievance that they had, or they failed to do so and the movement was therefore

abolished. By using Griffin's lens of social movement criticism as my rhetorical lens, I

analyze the logistics of the rise and fall of the Black Lives Matter movement regarding

the social media representation it had over the 8-day span in July 2016.

In Herbert W. Simon's 1970 essay "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements", Simon argues that social movement criticism should be based on theory. Taking Simon's advice on the need for a theoretical lens to support my rhetorical lens, I plan to utilize critical race theory to support my analysis.

Critical race theory is most often used to examine how race and racism is utilized in cultural forms of expression (Brizee, Tomkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Researchers using critical race theory further examine how victims of racism are able to express their victimization, as well as find ways to further avoid situations fueled by racism in the future (Brizee, Tomkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Critical Race Theory allows me to analyze how the movements uses facets of race and racism as a base for their movement. This theory provides the structure needed to analyze how race impacted the social media users' posts with the movement they choose to support. Through the use of social movement criticism paired with critical race theory, I am forming my own rhetorical argument surrounding the Twitter posts that involves the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter regarding the deaths of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and the Dallas Police Officers.

Summary

Chapter One provides the purpose for this study. This chapter has introduced the problem, provided the rationale for my study, and discussed the theoretical framework I am using for my rhetorical analysis.

Chapter Two includes a history of literature on social media advocacy, the power of a hashtag, and the use of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The second chapter references how traditional social movements fed through the traditional media. Chapter Two explores how this study examined how social movements have turned to using social media in their movements to provoke participation, support, and physical protest.

Chapter Three provides the methodology for how I gathered and analyzed the data collected. While Chapter Four examined the stages that the Black Lives Matter Movement embarked upon during the 8-day span in July 2016, and how the movement operated during the time frame, and what effect the Twitter users had upon it.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, discusses the final conclusions from the research, and shares implications from the study as a whole. This section highlights the limitations of my study, and suggests further research that could be conducted in relation to the topic.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Black Lives Matter movement, like most social movements, was created to launch a change socially. The campaign uses social media as their movement base when supplying the public with information, recruiting followers, and making their social demands heard. Chapter Two of this thesis explores previous literature based in social media advocacy and activism, the power of the hashtag in social media campaigns, the growing trend of slacktivism, and finally the Black Lives Matter campaign.

Social Media is thriving globally with seven in ten Americans utilizing social media to connect with others, surf the news, and share information ("Social Networking Use," 2017). Organizations, both in business and in cause, have turned towards the use of social media to attract customers, followers, and further garner support for their business or cause (Desai & Wolf, 2014). Due to the current political instability and financial downfalls affecting countries across the globe, there has been a substantial increase in civic participation concerning issues that the public finds unjustifiable (Simoes & Campos, 2016). Desai and Wolf (2014) explain that social media platforms offer a wide range of resources for business' and organizations, such as access to "individuals and groups, which in the past may have been too elusive, remote or marginalized to be communicated with offline and the apparent lower cost associated with building websites

and utilizing 'free' tools such as Facebook, compared to more traditional tactics"

(p. 72). It can be suggested that businesses benefit from the easy access to free

advertising for their product that social media can offer, while social organizations are

taking advantage of rallying support that social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter,

Tumblr, can offer for their cause. Desai and Wolf (2014), the authors suggest that those

utilizing social media for a cause should focus less on control and reputation

management, and more on engagement and community empowerment. Social

movements using social media to gain followers, support, and even attention should focus

more on their use of social media to gain respect for their cause, rather than attempting to

control what they are trying to change.

Social movements often include the use of protesting in a way that gathers as

much action, support, and awareness as possible. Protesting has occurred in forms like

marches, sit ins, and even the act of burning objects to revolt against political agendas has

been a vital part in U.S history. Leighty, D'Silva, and Johns (2016) explain that social

movement leaders have been utilizing social media platforms to garner support and to

maintain coherent communication with their citizens. Through analyzing tweets from the

time that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in India came into power (2012) to the time that

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can reach others, persuading them to join the fight, which is only building upon the
attention for the protest, and/or cause. Social media advocacy can build communities of
mass size to fight for a common idea or act of social change.

  Advocacy and activism, while similar but different, give individuals a chance to
express their views and opinions in a way that allows them the chance to make change
occur. Through social media, individuals are given the opportunity to attempt to take part

in something that they would not have the chance to in person. The opportunity given is explored through the way they individuals express their actions.

The Power of the Hashtag

Hashtags have been the backbone of social media based protests and advocacy programs. Not only do hashtags often name the protest, (i.e #OccupyWallStreet, #BlackLivesMatter, #BringBackOurGirls), but they are often the driving force in gaining support, members, and political and social attention. Hashtags themselves have become a means towards activism whereby social media users can participate and invite others to participate in social causes that they care about. Yang (2016) asserts that "hashtag activism happens when large numbers of postings appear on social media under a common hashtagged word, phrase, or sentence with a social or political claim" (p. 13). Hashtags differ from other forms of traditional digital activism, like signing online petitions, because hashtags embody a form of expression and invention for the protesters/activists (Yang, 2016). Yang (2016) argues that the reason hashtags are as influential as they are because instead of using one word like "change" for their protests, they instead use "complete sentence structures, such as the following examples: #BlackLivesMatter, #BringBackOurGirls, #StopGamerGate, #WhyIStayed, #OccupyEverywhere, #CancelColbert, #ThisIsACoup, #ICantBreathe, #MuslimsAreNotTerrorists (p. 14). The hashtags used in forms of activism or protest contain verbs that express a powerful sense of action and force to be driven by the individual posting or tweeting them. The rhetoric used in the hashtag is demanding and

forceful in a way that challenges the issue and empowers the hashtagger to take immediate action (Yang, 2016). Hashtags are the call to action section of the protest that attracts fellow citizens to join in on the fight being held.

Hashtags are also individualistic in the idea that no one owns the hashtag. Hashtags are created by an individual, but are not patented by the said individual. Hashtags are universal. The hashtag is shared among fellow social media users within the scheme of the social media site. Once a hashtag has had enough use on the social media site it becomes a trending topic, or trending phrase. The same concept is used in forming a protest, or advocacy group, via social media. Hashtags are built in a way that allows individuals to join in an ongoing conversation about social justice (Crandall & Cunningham, 2016). Crandall and Cunningham (2016) suggest that hashtags are the key to getting the younger generation to connect with cultural and political issues. Hashtags keep those who use social media involved in current political and social issues across the globe. Hashtags allow those utilizing hashtags an outlet to express themselves when they feel as if their voice hardly matters. Hashtags attract individuals in a way that makes them feel as if their voice matters, and could very well make a difference to the situation at hand.

Crandall and Cunningham (2016) give detailed examples of how hashtag activism has worked in the past. For instance, in protest of the death of Michael Brown, people took to Twitter using the hashtag #FergusonDecision to encourage individuals to "lay down in the streets across America for 4.5 minute intervals to signify the four and a half

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hours his body remained on the ground after being shot" (Crandall & Cunningham, 2016, p. 24). The authors further detail how through the hashtag #ShameOnKomen, Susan G. Komen was pressured into reversing its decision in pulling its funding from Planned Parenthood (Crandall & Cunningham, 2016). The power built from users behind the #ShameOnKomen hashtag was one of the factors persuading Susan G. Komen to make a change within their company. Hashtags not only recruit individuals to express themselves, and to join in the protest for social change, but they are also the driving force behind convincing people to act physically in rally's and sit ins. Hashtags filter across the world, not just in one location. It is through hashtags that a protest, like the #FergusonDecision, was able to form. Unlike protests in the past, social media protests are not centralized in one location, like Wall Street or Washington, DC, but rather in cities across the country. The hashtag is the commonality for each protester, advocate, or activist to play his or her part. The hashtag only informs the group on when, where, and how to act in a physical presence. With social media platforms becoming more and more popular, hashtag activism is barely beginning to demonstrate its capabilities.

Slacktivism

While the use of social media in social movements is evident in the attempt to gain followers and support, the actual value of the change taking place from social movements using social media can be questioned. The use of social media in social movements successfully accomplishes garner support and recognition for the issue, however researchers argue that while social media may gather support, it does not foster

legitimate change (Breuer, 2012; Glenn, 2015; Penney, 2015). Social movements that use social media often gain followers using Facebook pages and hashtags through Twitter, but those followers that simply like the page and retweet the organizations' motivational quotation of the day fail to uphold the actual activist or advocate role, reputation, and image. Individuals who believe in the cause, but only retweet or share a post but fail to act upon the cause in a physical sense fall under the term "slacktivism." Glenn (2015) explains that the term "slacktivism" is a combination of the words "slacker" and "activism" and has been increasingly used to describe the disconnect between awareness and action through the use of social media (p. 81). Individuals who practice slacktivism perform an effortless display of support for a social cause that is paired with the lack of exertion to bestow significant effort to enact change (Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014). Breuer (2012) further equates slacktivism with a "lazy person's activism," arguing that those who use social media to share their support for an issue are only using social media to do so because it is more time-efficient, which further implies that the individual is not as committed to the cause that he/she is pretending to support (p. 4). Slacktivism causes individuals to feel a false sense of pride for their actions. Slacktivism causes users to believe that their actions of liking a video involving social situations is enough to embark change in the issue. However, like the video on Facebook, or retweeting a social movement's tweet is only bringing awareness to the issue. The only way to promote true activism or advocacy is for the user to physically act for change to occur. While slacktivism can include the use of signing internet petition and joining social network

groups that are pushing for change to occur, there is no personal effort being enforced by the individual to effect the change that the original poster/organizer is trying to create (Breuer, 2012).

Breuer (2012) further argues that slacktivists are narcissistic in nature. It can be suggested that social media users who share a video involving social issues is merely an act of "self-presentation" (Breuer, 2012, p. 4). Breuer (2012) explains her presumption that those who share their desire for change through social media, but not in a physical sense, are merely trying to gain social prestige amongst their friends. Social media users engage in social media support to gain social and psychological rewards such as an increased social status, and a strengthened self-image of political efficacy (Penney, 2015). Penney (2015) furthers that even though the users' image is boasted among their social media friends, and amongst themselves, true political efficacy is rarely reached through these means. True activists and advocates will act upon their cause of choice through multiple outlets including social media, physically protesting and rallying groups, and communication with the source of the issue (Breuer, 2012). Users who fail to take their efforts for the cause further than their keyboard are taking part in the art of slacktivism, rather than honest activism and advocacy for change.

Kristofferson et al., (2014) argue that social media users will often engage is support through social media for a social cause when the opportunity for attention is at a high. Penney (2015) elaborate further, explaining that social media users utilize social media as a platform to construct their identity through constant social interaction. Penney

(2015) provides the high-profile example of the 2013 campaign that used an image of a red equal sign to garner support for same-sex marriage. On March 25, 2013, the U.S Supreme Court began their hearings involving Proposition 8 and Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) regarding the laws that once banned same-sex marriage in the United States. To garner attention for the hearings, the Human Rights Campaign began asking its supporters to gather followers who would be willing to show their support for the cause. Many of those followers took to social media, which birthed the act of social media users altering their personal profile picture from one of their choice to that of a red equal sign to show their followers that they stand in solidarity in support of same sex-marriage. Penney (2015) interviewed 22 U.S adult Facebook users who changed their profile picture to that of the red equal sign and found that only three out of the 22 participants changed their picture to directly influence the Supreme Court decision on DOMA and Proposition 8.

Critics of slacktivism argue that slacktivism has the potential to hurt the "real" and physical social efforts that movements use to make change, such as "protests, community volunteerism, and charity" (Lee & Hsieh, 2013, p. 1). Lee & Hsieh (2013) suggests that the laziness presented in slacktivism can hinder the individual from acting in a physical sense because the individual feels as if he or she has already completed their good deed of the day through Facebook or Twitter. Rather than promoting a stronger relation with the cause between the social media user, slacktivism gives the user a false sense of efficacy in their actions. To utilize social media to advocate for an issue, the user

must fulfil the full potential offered by taking the steps further needed to fight for legitimate change (Lee & Hsieh, 2013).

Through the previous research conducted, it is suggested that while slacktivism supplies the social media user with rewards within it's social circle, and a stronger sense of political efficacy, the efforts provided fail to render any legitimate change within a political or social atmosphere. Social media users built their identity through the use of social media, and the sense of activism or advocacy that they feel through the act of a "like" on Facebook, or a retweet on Twitter, fail to provide any significant results away from the make-up of the individual.

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter campaign is a relatively new campaign. Bailey and Leonard (2015) explain that the three simple words "Black Lives Matter" have come to define "this generation's ongoing struggle against persistent state-sponsored violence with black bodies as its target" (p. 67). What started as a simple phrase, defining the need for a movement for social change, quickly morphed into a guiding light that highlights the complex issues surrounding racial discrimination. The Black Lives Matter campaign began after the death of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin who was killed on February 26, 2012 (Lebron, 2017). The seventeen-year-old was walking through his Florida community wearing a dark hoodie and holding a soft drink and candy in his hands, when a neighborhood watchman, George Zimmerman, called the local police reporting Martin as suspicious (Lebron, 2017). Zimmerman was advised by the 911 operator to avoid

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Martin, but Zimmerman initiated a confrontation between Martin which ended in

Zimmerman fatally shooting Martin (Lebron, 2017). Zimmerman faced the United States

Justice System in trial where he was found not guilty in 2013 (Lebron, 2017). It was after

the verdict that sisters, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created the

hashtag #BlackLivesMatter as a "call to action for Black people" (Lebron, 2017, p 3).

Lebron (2017) explains that the Black Lives Matter campaign was birthed out of the

"death and failure of our justice system to account for the unnecessary death of a Black

American that prompted three women to offer three basic and urgent words to the

American people: Black lives matter" (p. 4). The Black Lives Matter campaign

challenges the idea of white privilege and supremacy in an attempt to dismantle the status

quo that depicts Black Americans as second best (Bailey & Leonard, 2015). The Black

Lives Matter campaign does not have a single leader behind the campaign, besides the

three sisters' role in creating it (Lebron, 2017). The Black Lives Matter campaign is

operated through the public's use of retweeting updates on Twitter, sharing stories on

Facebook, and the physical rallying support promoted through Chapters based in cities

across the country.

The Black Lives Matter campaign utilizes social media to gather followers, build

a reputation, and further keep the public up to date on the issues between Black lives

living and dying in the United States. Lebron (2017) explains that the Black Lives Matter

campaign uses the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter to "motivate, mobilize, and inform the

actions and programs of the local branches a part of the movement" (p. 5). The campaign

uses social media to gain attention from the public and the media. Bailey and Leonard (2015) explain that the rhetoric and actions used by the campaign imagines a future that guarantees that the "voices, humanity, and the lives of African Americans are protected, valued, and embraced" in the future (p. 68). From the outside looking in, the movement is perceived as an act that is attempting to guarantee a better future for Black lives, however, Bailey and Leonard (2015) argue that the campaign itself carries its urgency in the immediate present. For instance, in June of 2015, a police officer in McKinney, Texas was caught manhandling a 15-year-old Black female at a pool party (Azadeh, 2017). The video further depicts the officer pulling a loaded gun on the teenagers involved in the situation (Azadeh, 2017). Bailey and Leonard (2015) explain that although the officer was put on leave, the media began depicting the teenagers as "thugs" or "gangsters" (p. 75). The media failed to depict the teenagers as the victims in the situation. Bailey and Leonard (2015) suggest that the Black Lives Matter movement thrives in situations like these because it gives the movement a chance to shed light on the negative labels and stereotypes attached to Black individuals. For instance, the Black Lives Matter movement is forever growing in urgency due to the increase of Black deaths at the hands of police officers being projected in mainstream media. The more attention that these deaths raise, the more important the movement becomes. While the movement is growing in momentum as every Black life is taken at the hands of law enforcement, Lebron (2017) explains that issues of racism in regards to Black lives is an issue as old as America, only

leaving him to ponder whether or not the Black Lives Matter campaign is equipped with enough momentum, potential, and power behind it to truly make a difference.

The growing attention that the Black Lives Matter Movement has garnered in the previous three years has caused for the growing use of the campaign in high education. Miller and Schwartz (2016) explain that as an adult educating other adults on matters that compare the past and the present should be taken in a way that provides the student with a temporal space to learn. Schwartz (2014) states that the temporal space is not a physical space, but rather a mental and emotional space where students can make links between situations from the past and situations in the present. The temporal space provides the individual a space to understand how issues that affect a person on a personal level are connected to larger social and economic situations, both in the present and the past (Miller & Schwartz, 2016). Miller and Schwartz (2016) explain that as White adult educators need to employ a sense of connection between their students and movements like the Black Lives Matter movement. Students should engage the movement through critical analysis that includes classroom discussions of race to help build a bridge of understanding between the races. The authors are attempting to build a relationship between the students and the movements that are occurring in reality. Miller and Schwartz (2016) explains that by teaching students to critically analyze movements like the Black Lives Matter Movement, the students have a chance to obtain a sense of agency in their own actions towards the cause.

When the Black Lives Matter Movement became a phrase well known in households around the country, educational forums such as Seeking Solidarity: Lessons from Ferguson was created by the LAGCC Social Science Department that allowed students a chance to discuss what was occurring in Ferguson in the aftermath of the death of Michael Brown (Miller & Schwartz, 2016). Students choose to reach out to others when discussing the issues that the movement brings to like, such as race, injustice, and systematic oppression.

Not only does teaching the Black Lives Matter movement in the classroom allow the students an outlet for connection and efficacy, but highlight Black Lives Matter in the classroom pushes for better standards for Black students in education. In 2016 the US Office of Child Care reported in their Expulsion and Suspension Policy Statement that in preschool enrollment 19% are Black students, but Black students make up 45% of preschoolers suspended. The racial disparities depict how Black students are treated in the United States Education System. Howard (2016) explains that the level of scrutiny for Black children begins early in education before intensifying over time. The article further explains how not only is the education for Black students failing to uphold its standards, but that security and surveillance of Black students is disproportionate to that of White students. Howard (2016) explains that there is an increasing presence of law enforcement officials on school grounds for "low-income, and racially segregated schools where children of color are most likely to attend" (p. 104). The Black Lives Matter Movement highlights how Black individuals are mistreated in the judicial system,

Howard (2016) uses the Black Lives Matter movement to depict even the youngest Black members of society are being mistreated by the system educationally.

The Black Lives Matter movement is also being used as a narrative lens for history classes across the country (Perry, 2016). When participating on a panel titled "African American Struggles for Freedom and Civil Rights," Perry (2016) explains that to depict the struggles that African Americans, narratives from the Black Lives Matter movement should be used. Perry (2016) explicates how over through the years of 2014 through 2016, he utilized the deaths of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and the Charleston shooting to give the students a current example of the unjust situations that Black Americans are struggling through. The narratives of Black lives exemplify how personal and present the current situation is, providing the students with a sense of efficacy for the movement.

Summary

Social media advocacy and activism in the form of hashtags has become commonly used by political groups and social movements to organize support for their cause ("Social Networking Use," 2016). Today's hashtag, could easily be leading tomorrow's protest. This chapter has covered the previous literature published on social media advocacy and activism, the power behind a hashtag, slacktivism, and the history and educational use of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Black Lives Matter movement, while relatively young in the sense of movements, is slowly paving the way for better understanding the issues and struggles that Black individuals are facing today.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes social movement criticism as explained by Leland Griffin paired with critical race theory to analyze the 100 tweets provided by the public from July 5 through July 12, 2016, regarding the Black Lives Matter movement in relation to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas Police Officers. Chapter Three explains how the 100 tweets were gathered for this study, as well as a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework used to analyze the publics tweets.

Data Collection Tool for Rhetorical Artifacts

I used Sysomos, a social media management and analytics program, to gather the tweets for this study. The Sysomos software was created to "turn social media data into actionable insights" ("Sysomos," 2017). Sysomos is leading the world in social marketing and analytics for top notch agencies around the world. Agencies, like Coca-Cola, Visa, and Time Warner all use Sysomos to track their social media references and insights for business measures. The Sysomos software is used to help agencies track their digital foot print in a way that encourages stronger customer relations and opportunities for company growth ("Sysomos," 2017). Sysomos was chosen as the data collection tool for this study due to its ability to collect mass information quickly and without bias.

In using the Sysomos software, I input the key term "#BlackLivesMatter" as a

mandatory search keyword, as well as input the terms "Philando Castile", "Alton Sterling", and "Dallas Police Officers" as optional terms. I set the time frame for collection from July 5 through July 12, 2017. The Tweets were pulled at random disregarding any race, sex, gender, or personal/business account. The only limitations in the search were the keywords presented, the time frame, and that the tweets must be in English. The tweets were collected without borders in location.

When restricting the search according to the limitations presented, 3,340,560 tweets were found with the designated keywords. Sysomos then allows users to pull a random sample with a minimum of 3000 or 5000 tweets. From the search, I exported a random sample of 3000 tweets. The tweets were pulled from Sysomos into an Excel spreadsheet. To narrow the 3000 tweets down to 100, I used the website Randomizer to pull 30 sets of 100 Unique Numbers. These numbers signified the tweets in the Excel spreadsheet. The dataset was then cleaned up in the spreadsheet.

Social Movement Criticism

To analyze the tweets collected I used Leland Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism. It is widely believed that Leland Griffin single handedly pioneered the study of movements from a rhetorical perspective (Morris & Browne, 2013). Griffin (1952) explained that the most important part of social movements or historical movements is the word *movement* due to its reference to change. Social movements were created to persuade a group about changes needed in existing laws or societal practice.

In the 1952 study "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Griffin proposed the idea that rhetoricians need to expand from merely analyzing a single orator or piece of oration, and rather dig deeper into analyzing groups and social situations that occur

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(Morris & Browne, 2013). Griffin discovered that in contrast to analyzing the oration of one individual in a neo-classical manner, it is possible to rhetorically analyze the oration of multiple individuals that revolve around one situation or phenomenon. Griffin constructed three assumptions based upon social movement criticism. First, Griffin theorized that social movements consist of two general types; pro and anti movements (Griffin, 1952). Pro movements argue for the "creation or acceptance of an idea of institution", while anti movements are created to "arouse public opinion to the destruction or rejection of an existing institution or idea" (Burgchardt, 2010, p. 395). Second, Griffin found that pro rhetoricians work towards establishing an ideal, while anti rhetoricians move to destroy the institution at hand. Finally, Griffin identified three stages to a social movement: inception, rhetorical crisis (development), and consummation. While Griffin dictated the movement's classification of movement, he furthers that the "main criterion for judging social movement discourse is in analyzing the movement's effectiveness" (Burgchardt, 2010, p. 395). To justify a movement's ability to conduct change, scholars must judge the movement through its formation. Griffin (1952) explained that the rhetorician's task is to "isolate the rhetorical movement within the matrix of the historical movement: the rhetorical movement is the focus of the study" (p. 10). The rhetorician must isolate, analyze, evaluate, and describe the movement so that he or she can determine "the pattern of public discussion, the configuration of discourse, and the physiognomy of persuasion to the particular movement that is being analyzed" (p. 10).

Griffin (1952) explained that within a social movement there are two classes of rhetoricians distinguished: (1) aggressor orators and journalists and (2) defendant rhetoricians. In a pro movement, aggressor orators and journalists work towards establishing in a movement, but in an anti-movement they work to destroy (Griffin, 1952). The defendant rhetoricians attempt to resist reform in a pro-movement and in an anti-movement they attempt to defend the institutions at hand (Morris & Browne, 2013). Each character within the movement plays a role in both a pro and an anti-social movement.

Social movements work in phases in regards to their development. Griffin (1952) explains the first stage of a social movement, the period of inception is a time when origins of a pre-existing sentiment are encouraged by rhetoricians who believe the same way, which serves as the motivation behind the starting of the movement (Griffin, 1952). Groups that all believe in the same cause or the same idea form a group together and begin discussing the commonalities with the situation or issue at hand, which then sparks the beginning of a movement. The period of rhetorical crisis is the instance where an opposing group of rhetoricians work against the social movement group (Morris & Browne, 2013). Griffin (1952) explained that these groups can take a stance against the social movement group by "forsaking of trite or ineffective appeals, the initiation of new arguments, the employment of additional channels of propagation, or merely through the flooding of existing channels with a moving tide of discourse" (p. 11). During this phase of the movement, individuals will begin to offer counter arguments against the cause that

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the movement is attempting to persuade others upon. The debate between the two entities

create a crisis among the participants. The groups within the social movement cause

opposing ideals within the participants, often causing individuals to falter in the side of

the argument which they support. During the final phase, the period of consummation,

the social movement begins to fizzle out. Griffin (1952) explained that in this period two

options often occur, either the aggressor rhetoricians will abandon their efforts because

they believe that they have won by persuading change for their issues or situation or they

abandon the movement because they believe that due to the opposing force their efforts

are useless in persuading change to occur. Either way, the social movement comes to an

end.

In response to Griffin (1952), Miller (1999) explains that social movements do

not necessarily end on a negative note, but rather end in one of four ways: repression, co-

optation, success, or failure. Regarding the repression, social movements will begin to

decline because agents of authority have utilized measures (often violent) to bring control

to the movement, often in hopes to destroy it. When a social movement ends in co-

optation, the decline is due to a leader failing to uphold the values of the social

movement. When a social movement declines due to success or failure, the movement

either successfully accomplished addressing the grievance that they had, or they failed to

do so and the movement was therefore abolished.

Social Movement Classification

Griffin (1952) explains that when exploring a social movement rhetorically, the movement will be classified as either an anti-movement or a pro-movement. While the pro-movement argues for acceptance, or creation of an idea, the anti-movement attempts to persuade the public to reject an existing idea (Morris & Browne, 2013). In terms of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the movement can be classified as a pro-movement. The movement is using the #BlackLivesMatter to raise awareness for the idea that Black lives matter in the current society. The movement claims that the American system, educationally, economically, and legally target Black lives in a way that hinders them from succeeding due to racial discrimination (Black Lives Matter, 2017). The movement is arguing for the acceptance of the idea that anti-Black racism still exists in the current day. The Black Lives Matter movement claims to be a "unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes" (Black Lives Matter, 2017, p. 2). The Black Lives Matter movement touches on the fact that Black lives are at risk of discrimination by law enforcement, but urges supporters to understand that the movement stretches far past that. The movement's cause is to bring light to the issues that Black individuals face, with recognition of the complexities of intersectionality. The movement wishes to highlight the need for their basic human rights to be respected. In the United States there are various federal laws that prohibit the discrimination of an individual based upon their national origin, race, color, religion, disability, sex, and familial status. American citizens cannot be denied equal opportunity

as a result of who they are as individuals. The federal laws that are in place to prevent racial discrimination in government institutions in America fall short in protecting Black lives from unjust actions. The Black Lives Matter movement fulfills the pro-movement classification because it is attempting to persuade the public that even though these laws are set in place to protect the Black lives in the United States, racial discrimination is still prevalent in many education, economic, social, and judicial contexts throughout the country.

Analysis Procedure

To analyze the 100 tweets collected for this study, I coded each tweet looking for six different characteristics. First, each tweet was examined for emotion, specifically looking for anger, grief, unity, confusion, fear, and neutrality. When analyzing the tweets I found that out of the 100 tweets collected, 28 appeared to express fear, 24 expressed grief, 30 called for unity, 7 expressed confusion, 1 expressed fear, and 10 were neutral with their emotion. The 10 that were coded as neutral involved the Twitter user reporting on the facts of the events that occurred, rather than attaching an emotion to them. Secondly, I coded each tweet by their valence towards the Black Lives Matter movement. 97 of the tweets appear to be positive, or in support of the Black Lives Matter movement through their use of the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, and 3 suggest that they are anti Black Lives Matter in relation to the events that occurred. Third, I coded the tweets by looking for Twitter users who expressed a call to action in their post. Out of the 100 tweets, 5 of them expressed a call to action. The fourth method of coding used examined

the tweets for their focus. Out of the 100 tweets, 25 involved police officers, 34 revolved around Alton Sterling, 10 involved Philando Castile, 13 expressed the Twitter users views on police officers paired with Sterling and Castile, and 18 were directly addressed to the situations involving both Sterling and Castile. Next, I coded the tweets looking for whether or not they were positive towards police officers or negative towards police officers. Out of the 38 tweets that involved the word *police officer* or *cop*, 14 appeared positive, 19 appeared negative, and 5 appeared to be neutral in relation. For this study, the 97 Twitter users whose tweet appeared to be positive are considered to be allies of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the 3 users who negatively expressed their views towards the movement are critics. Finally, when coding the 100 tweets, I found that out of the 100 tweets chosen, 11 tweets fell under support for a pro-movement classification and 89 tweets support the anti-movement classification. For the tweet to be coded as support for a pro-classification, the tweet must emote a sense of support for bringing awareness to the issues that Black individuals face from the American public and government. Tweets that state facts from the events that occurred during the week without emotion attached to the tweet also supports the pro-movement classification. For the tweet to be used in support of the anti-movement classification, the tweet must indicate feelings that places the Black Lives Matter movement as a movement that is solely against law enforcement and police brutality.

The conclusions based on this analysis were also strengthened by coding the 100 tweets in search of recurring themes relating to images, hashtags, and emotions. The 100

tweets collected for this study serve as a snapshot of how the public, through Twitter and the Black Lives Matter hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, viewed the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers in July 2016. The six characteristics coded through the 100 tweets, with the support of reoccurring images, hashtags, and emojis offer support for the suggestions and conclusions collected through this analysis. This study analyzes the tweets collected and categorized by following Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism procedure by examining the Black Lives Matter movements live cycle stages, it's movement classification, and the emotions, images, and hashtags used through critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory

By using Griffin's lens of social movement criticism as my rhetorical lens, analyzed 100 tweets involving the Black Lives Matter movement regarding the social media representation it had over the 8-day span in July 2016. In Herbert W. Simon's 1970 essay "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," Simon argues that social movement criticism should be based on theory. Taking Simon's (1970) advice on the need for a theoretical lens to support my rhetorical lens, I utilized critical race theory to support my analysis.

Critical race theory is most often used to examine how race and racism is utilized in cultural forms of expression (Brizee, Tomkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Critical race theory was created to argue that racism is built in the cracks of society both historically and socially. Rose (2017) analyzes the court room by examining the use of

white supremacy in law through the use of Critical Race Theory. Historically, white supremacy came before evidence in the court room (Rose, 2017). From the eighteenth through mid-to-late nineteenth centuries, there were laws in place that prohibited people of color from testifying against White individuals (Rose, 2017). In the eyes of the court, even if the White individual committed the crime, if only a colored individual could testify against them, then the White individual was not guilty (Rose, 2017). Theorizing in the light of white supremacy, critical race theorists use popular culture to rewrite social and historical instances where racism occurs. The main goal of the theory is to reject both liberal and conservative in weighing the issue (Rose, 2017). Critical race theorists reject racist values in order to create fresh values that analyze situations without a racist lens. critical race theory posits how individuals must express their reality in dealing with racism to others so that the circumstances that are occurring can be rendered. Critical race theory explains that individuals who have dealt with racism must express themselves through narratives or voicing of personal opinions and beliefs so that the public may relate to the stories in a way that drives them to search for change (Rose, 2017). Through an internal critique, critical race theorists analyze the contradictions that occur in society that highlight how racism flourishes, before creating a crisis of logic that demonstrates how the situation fails to treat people equally when it comes to the color of an individual's skin (Rose, 2017).

Researchers using critical race theory further examine how victims of racism are able to express their victimization, as well as find ways to further avoid situations fueled

by racism in the future (Brizee, Tomkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Critical race theory analyzes racial issues through narratives and personal observations of individuals who have experienced racism in their lives. In a case study analyzing high school students of color personal narratives in relation to race and politics during the Obama American Era, Smith (2017) explores how students personally relate to images published during the Obama era through critical race theory. Smith (2017) found that students often discussed race when a White teacher wanted a Black individual's perception of the issue they were discussing in class. The students reported feeling as if they should be expected to know "all this black history while only 17" (Smith, 2017, p. 183). When discussing the classroom issues Smith was uncovering, he spoke with teachers in the high school and found that teachers "curbed some of their curricula regarding the Civil Rights Movement and issues like affirmative action for fear of the backlash they would face from White students" (p. 184). Smith (2017) found that the teachers, even though they were in the position of authority in the classroom, allowed their White students to dictate what and how they taught historical proceedings. The critical race theory was applied in this situation due to the use of White Supremacy and the personal narratives described in the situation. Smith's (2017) application suggests that teachers, who play the authoritative figure role who should be pushing for change, were the ones increasing the likelihood of racism in the school. Considering the way critical race theory analyzes racial issues, the theory provides the theoretical background needed for me to analyze how the public's response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the Dallas attack highlight

the racist tendencies addressed through the Black Lives Matter Movement. Critical race theory presents a way for individuals to use their personal narratives to build a better understanding of the racism that they are facing.

Summary

Chapter Three explained the methodology applied in analyzing the Black Lives Matter Movement using the Twitter posts regarding the death of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and the attack on Dallas Police Officers as the rhetorical artifact. I apply Leland Griffin's social movement criticism paired with the critical race theory to rhetorically analyze the public's response to the attacks.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Chapter Four explores the analysis of 100 tweets provided by the public from July 5

through July 12, 2016, in response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and

the attack on Dallas Police officers. I use Leland Griffin's (1952) social movement

criticism through a critical race theory lens in my analysis. Examining the tweets

rhetorically provides an in-depth analysis of the movement through the eyes of the public,

providing an up close and personal view at how the public has responded to the racially

driven situation that occurred during the second week of July 2016.

The Black Lives Matter Movement was created in 2012 after the death of

Trayvon Martin at the hands of George Zimmerman. The movement was pushed further

in 2014 after officer Derrick Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown. The movement was

created in the attempt to raise awareness for the idea that Black bodies in the United

States are treated unjustly in education, social welfare, and at the hands of law

enforcement. The movement was created with the desire to restore justice to Black

individuals by creating a community of followers who, through the same vision, work

tirelessly to bring a sense of equality to the public regarding race relations, specifically

between White and Black individuals. The Black Lives Matter movement reaches out to

specific groups within the Black community like Black Women, Black Transgender individuals, Black families, Black individuals with disabilities, Black members of the LGBT+ community, and the push to form Black villages within America. The movement affirms that all Black lives matter, no matter their circumstances. A social movement begins and ends in a process. Griffin (1952) explains that through social movement criticism, the movement will progress through three stages: inception, rhetorical crisis (development), and consummation. The three stages presented echo the beginning, middle, and end of a movement. movement represented in three stages: inception, rhetorical crisis, and consummation. In terms of inception, the Black Lives Matter movement was created in 2012, but the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the Dallas attack occurred in 2016, which is four years after the initial creation of the movement. The second stage within the social movement, the rhetorical crisis, occurred for the Black Lives Matter Movement when social media users began to use the hashtag, #blacklivesmatter, in a way that was not intended by the original creators, which is the focus for this analysis. The hashtag quickly broke away from being used in relation to support for Black lives and awareness of the injustice that Black individuals face, and quickly morphed into being associated with violence, anger, and retaliation. The movement was created to bring unity to the country in regards to the racial disparity that Black individuals face, rather than as an outlet for Black individuals to violently revolt against the system. The week of July 16 illustrates a rhetorical crisis for the movement. Through analyzing the artifact, the consummation stage of the movement cannot be discussed because the movement is still ongoing.

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A Movement in Rhetorical Crisis

When Philando Castile was killed his girlfriend live recorded the situation between Castile and the police officer as it occurred. Twitter handle @clivehenry1, tweeted the video that Philando Castile's girlfriend posted. @clivehenry1 further explained in his tweet "Philando Castile (Innocent Man Dies)- #PoliceBrutality #BlackLivesMatter". Part of the second stage process of the social movement, the rhetorical crisis, has occurred through the tweets in response to the deaths in July. Twitter user Papi Chulo, @averyurbanlife1, a Black female tweeted "#BlackLivesMatter Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and all Black people who have died due to police brutality". Papi Chulo and @clivehenry1 used the hashtag #PoliceBrutality in relation with the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag which linked the two ideas together. The Black Lives Matter movement's original goal was to raise awareness for the injustice that has occurred for Black bodies, not to turn police brutality into the main focus of their cause. The contradiction that occurred suggests a switch in the movements focus for change. Twitter user Papi Chulo further attached a letter stating that "Black people in this country are brutalized, victimized, and killed just because our skin color is different. We are treated lesser, cops are able to kill us and go home and not think twice or be punished just because we knew our rights we were considered violent and aggressive while being unarmed". Twitter user Sean Warhurst, @kumquatturtle, a White Austrailian writer tweeted "Just watched the Philando Castile and Alton Sterling vids, heartbreaking that our society has come to this this #Blueliesmatter #BlackLivesMatter". The rhetoric used

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by the Twitter users, suggests that the main issue that Black lives face is law enforcement. Twitter user Warhurst took the known hashtag, #BlueLivesMatter, and twisted in a way that was derogatory towards law enforcement by using the hashtag #BlueLiesMatter. The tweets suggest that the Twitter user is implying that even though the police officer may have been in the wrong during the death, because he wears a blue uniform to work, his lies fail to matter. The direct attack the Twitter user Papi Chulo expresses through her tweet suggests that all law enforcement officers are criminal, and that all Black individuals approached by law enforcement are victims, no matter the situation. Rather than pushing for change, like the Black Lives Matter movement set out to do in the beginning, the rhetoric of the 89 Twitter users who associate with the movement are shifting the reputation of the Black Lives Matter movement from awareness to outrage.

As the movement's rhetoric shifted to that of police brutality, and the public began to respond with follow up hashtags like #AllLivesMatter and #BlueLivesMatter. After the deaths of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, protesters took to the streets in Dallas, TX on July 7, 2016. During the protest, a gunman, Micah Xavier Johnson, opened fire upon the crowd, aiming to hit as many police officers as he possibly could, successfully killing five officers. After the attack, Twitter users responded explaining that before Johnson opened fire the protest was anti-brutality and peaceful in nature. Certified Twitter account user Linda Sarsour, @lsarsour, a Palistinian American-Muslim tweeted a photo of police officers posing for pictures with the Dallas protesters.

Figure 1: Linda Sarsour's Tweet

Sarsour's image is accompanied with "Dallas Police Shooting Started as a Peaceful Protest, Not a #BlackLivesMatter Attack". In a video rant posted by Twitter user Britney Mechelle, @xobritneym, explains her views on the deaths. Mechelle, a Black female entrepreneur explains in her video that "anyone who thinks there is not a problem, it's you. You're the problem, whether you are silent, on the opposing team, or if you are indifferent. You are the problem". She further explains that lives on both ends, police officer and Black individuals alike, were lost for no reason. Twitter user DennisVanStaalduinen, @DenVan a White male community activist member located in Canada, responds to the attack that occurred in Dallas, TX by tweeting "Okay. The #Dallas police shooting was a terrible, sickening, gut-punching of pure evil. But let's not forget: #BlackLivesMatter". Through coding the tweets, I found that 24 Twitter users

used the attack on the Dallas police officers as a base argument for why Black lives

should still matter. These users set out to express their own anger towards what they

believe were racially motivated attacks. The users transformed the anger they are feeling

from the deaths of Sterling and Castile in their responses in hopes to not only release their

own personal emotions, but to also garner support for what they believe truly happened.

Twitter users combined the hashtags in support of police officers with the support for

Black Lives Matter which created a sense of rhetorical crisis because it caused the

Twitter users to reevaluate their views on the situation. The Twitter users are torn

between wanting to feel safe in the presence of a police officer, but also feeling like they

must fear for their lives at the same time.

Out of the 100 tweets, two Twitter users attempted to pair the hashtag

#BlackLivesMatter with the #AllLivesMatter by expressing that everyone has the

possibility of being a victim of inappropriate force given by law enforcement. Twitter

user Steve, @stevenisettle, Tweets "#BLM #BlackLivesMatter #AllLivesMatter #Dallas

#Police" attached with an image of eight individuals side by side: four Black and four

White.

Figure 2: Steve's Tweet

The first image is of a Black teenager beside a White teenager paired with the caption "killed for playing with a toy". The second image set contains a Black and White teenager again with the caption "killed over headlight violation", followed by the third image set of another Black man and White man with the caption "killed for being homeless". The final image set is of a younger Black man juxtaposed an older White man with the caption "killed with hands in the air". The image posted suggests that no matter the color of an individuals' skin, the individuals have a chance of falling victim to police brutality. Following the pairing of #AllLivesMatter with #BlackLivesMatter, certified Twitter account user Laura Rollins, @IanMalcomsWife, tweeted "Alton Sterling was murdered. It's heinous. Why is this becoming normal? This cannot become normal!

#BlackLivesMatter #AllLivesMatter". Rollins is arguing that while #BlackLivesMatter is a justified issue, the use of the #AllLivesMatter suggests that there is an underlying issue presented in the death of the five police officers in Dallas. Through the critiquing of Whiteness through critical race theory, theorists suggest that the emotions emoted by those processing a racial experience or situation occur when they feel as if they can become victims of the same situation (Decuir-Gunby & Williams, 2007). It is determined that through critical race theory, when a White individual begins to feel as if he or she can become victim to the same situation as the one involving a different race, then the White individual will begin to act. The image presented in this instance suggests that police brutality can occur in any situation, no matter the race of the individual involved. This implies that police brutality is not a race issue, but rather an issue deeply rooted within law enforcement. The two users who used the relating hashtags suggest that there are users who have multiple views regarding the feelings felt from the events that occurred in July 2016.The image depicted in the tweet that placed both Blacks and White side by side being treated inappropriately by law enforcement suggests that even White individuals are fearful.

Although there are differing perspectives within the supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement and opposing views on the situation, the attention that the movement has been given by celebrity and political figures is prevalent in the life of the movement. Out of the 100 tweets, 28 of them were from certified Twitter accounts. Senator Elizabeth Warren responded to the deaths of Sterling and Castile by tweeting "Sandra Bland.

Freddie Gray. Michael Brown. Walter Scott. Tamir Rice. Eric Garner. Now Alton

Sterling & Philando Castile. #blacklivesmatter". Twitter user Eduardo Samaniego

tweeted a link to Minnesota's Governor explaining that "Philando Castile would still be

alive if he was white". In response to the deaths, CBC Politics tweeted "Even those who

dislike the phrase #BlackLivesMatter, surely we should be able to hear the pain of Alton

Sterling's family.' - @POTUS". Former President, Barack Obama's response to the death

of Alton Sterling, indicates the scope in which the Black Lives Matter movement, and

hashtag, has reached globally. President Obama's response to the death of Alton Sterling

highlights the battle between feeling grief for the lives lost, but anger for the reason they

were lost. The tweets suggest that users are conflicted with how they interpret the deaths

of the two Black men and the police officers. The deaths of the two Black men and five

police officers in July of 2016 has created an emotional response from the country.

Twitter users felt anger, grief, unity, helplessness, and fear when processing the deaths of

Sterling, Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers. The different emotions found in

the tweets suggest that those who referenced the Black Lives Matter movement in their

tweets were ruled by their emotion in the way they posted. The differing of emotions

towards the deaths that occurred indicate differing perspectives involved in the

movement. The hashtags associated with the posts causes for a representation of the

movements response as well. The rhetorical crisis stage in the Black Lives Matter

movement is projected during this week in July 2016 through the mix of emotions

experienced by the Twitter users in response to the deaths of seven individuals. Emotions such as anger, grief, confusion and unity are examined through the tweets.

Twitter user Serenaa xox, @YourGirlSerenaa, expresses her views on the deaths by tweeting "RIP ALTON STERLING. I can't handle this shit anymore! How in ANY WAY was his shooting justifiable? #BlackLivesMatter…but not to the police". Serenaa xox expresses her anger of the death of Sterling by making the claim that law enforcement fails to care about the loss of Black life. She utilizes the word "shit" and highlights the words "ANY WAY" by using capital letters to emphasize the anger she is feeling in this instance. Twitter user Michaela, @julybaby7703, further adds to the anger filled response by comparing the justice given for the death of Alton Sterling to the legal outcome of White male swimmer and rapist Brock Turner. Michaela tweets "K Brock Turner got 4 months for rape, but Alton Sterling died for SELLING CDs?!? #altonsterling #whiteprivilege #blacklivesmatter". Brock Turner was released from prison after a four-month stint for knowingly raping a woman. The Twitter user compared the act of selling CD's to that of raping another living individual. The lack of distributive justice between Sterling and Turner has made cause for the Twitter user to feel as if race played a role in how the lives of the two men played out through the justice system.

The feeling of grief is expressed by Twitter user OmotayoBeauty, @beauty_tayo, when she tweeted "Video: Alton Sterling's Son Breaks Down During Press Conference #BlackLivesMatter". Attached to the tweet was a video of Alton

Sterling's son expressing his own personal views and struggles involving the death of his father. Twitter user OmotayoBeauty expresses her emotions by relaying the emotions of another closer to the situation. The grief expressed by Twitter users was echoed with helplessness by many of the 100 tweets being analyzed. Twitter user Soul Snatcher, @J_Eiston2, attaches a video of a large White man resisting arrest with two police officers. In the video attached, the police officers use the appropriate force against the man to successfully restrain him. The tweet is accompanied with the response "Alton Sterling is DEAD, This Man Isn't? This Has to Stop. #BlackLivesMatter #AllLivesMatter #JusticeForAltonSterling". Twitter user, Soul Snatcher, puts forth a call to action to stop the disparate treatment whereby a White male is restrained yet a Black male is killed. The user highlights the injustice they feel is occurring between the races. As with the anger towards the failure of distributive justice between Brock Turner and Alton Sterling, the Twitter user's expressed incredulity also suggests that in the situation with law enforcement, race played a factor in how the men were treated.

While anger, grief, and incredulity were clearly present by many in response to the seven lives lost in July 2016, many Twitter users attempted to bring a sense of unity to the situation by expressing the need for the public to come together during the tragic time frame. After the death of Alton Sterling, Twitter user CBC Politics tweeted a quote from President Obama who stated, "Even those who dislike the phrase #BlackLivesMatter, surely we should be able to hear the pain of Alton Sterling's family". President Obama called for those who do not believe in the cause behind the Black Lives

Matter movement to feel something in regards to the racism that played out between the police officers and Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, it suggested that even the top authoritative figure in the United States too believed in the racism against Black bodies. This only further fueled the argument for many that the Black Lives Matter movement is targeted around racist tendencies by law enforcement. President Obama, the authoritative figure in charge of the United States, positively discussed the Black Lives Matter movement. It can be suggested that Obama's popularity factor could effect the way individuals viewed Sterling's death. Obama, America's spokesperson, endorses the movement through Sterling's death, which could suggest for a larger impact upon Twitter users to view the movement as positively as Obama has. In stating that everyone needs to understand that a life was lost, no matter the color of their skin, President Obama was attempting to bring the country together, rather than pull it apart by condoning further acts of violence, but only reiterated the idea that racism is still a prevalent issue.

Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were shot and killed within 48 hours of one another. The death of Sterling and Castile were the driving force behind why shooter Micah Johnson chose to attack Dallas police officers a mere two days later. Through the tweets reporting on the attack in Dallas, Chief Police Officer Brown explained that the shooter Micah Johnson was angry with the deaths of Sterling and Castile. The tweets analyzed suggest that the events that unfolded offered a sense of fear among many Black individuals. Certified Twitter account user Noisey, @NoiseyMusic, responds to the deaths of Sterling in their tweet by stating "ScHoolboy addresses #BlackLivesMatter

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Alton Sterling, & his fear for his daughter's future." Attached to his tweet is a poem written by ScHoolboy, a Black man, detailing the fear he has for his daughters' life in a society that doesn't respect the life of Black individuals. ScHoolboy explains "I feel bad that my daughter gotta live this life, I'll die for my daughter, gotta fight that fight". ScHoolboy expresses how if his daughter's life is threatened due to the color of her skin, then he is prepared to take the necessary steps to protect her. Certified Twitter account BuzzFeed News, @BuzzFeedNews, quotes Dallas Police Chief David Brown when he stated "We're hurting. Our profession is hurting. Dallas officers are hurting. We are heartbroken". The tweet follows in escalation of the death threats that Dallas police officers began receiving in response to the deaths of Sterling and Castile. All individuals involved, police officers and the public alike began to fear one another as a result of the situations that occurred in July 2016. The fear that enveloped the individuals who chose to focus their interpretation of the Black Lives Matter movement on police brutality became the driving force that created a divide between those who believe that the police officers were in the wrong, and those who do not.

As a response to the fear given, Dallas Police attempted to bring relief to the tensions that were prevalent after the attack by providing an outlet for protesters to turn their grief, anger, confusion, and fear into something that could better the situation as a whole. Twitter user Johanna, @C0nservativeGal, a White Conservative woman explains "BOOM Dallas Police Chief David Brown tells #BlackLivesMatter to get off the line and put in an application." The tweet is accompanied by an image of the news headline from

CBSDFW explaining that after the Dallas attack, Police Chief Brown stated in press conference that the most important piece of advice he could give Black men is to "become a part of the solution, serve your community. Don't be a part of the problem…we're hiring. Get off that protest line and put an application in." Dallas Police Chief Brown is attempting to morph the emotion felt from the situation into something that can benefit the Black Lives Matter movement as a whole.

The Switch Between Pro and Anti

The tweets analyzed suggest that the Black Lives Matter movement is operating during the second life cycle phase addressed through Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism, the Rhetorical Crisis. It is during this stage in the movements life cycle that differing views, often in the form of arguments, occur within the group, or between the group and an opposing force. It has been suggested by the tweets analyzed that the differing views on the movement posed have occurred with the differing views attached to the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter within the Twitter posts tweets during the week that Sterling and Castile were killed and the attack on the Dallas police officers.

Griffin (1952) explained that through the life of a social movement, the movement is classified as either a pro-movement or an anti-movement. Critical race theory highlights the prevalence of race being depicted through an individual's expression (Rose, 2017). The theory is often used in the analysis of situations where individuals feel victim to the act of white supremacy where the individual falls prey to a situation where racism plays a crucial role. The Twitter users who have expressed their

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feelings and opinions on the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers highlight the way they feel racism plays a role in the events that took place through their responses. The movement is analyzed through the characters that are presented. The characters are the ones who will inform the classification of the movement. The Black Lives Matter movement was created in 2012 portraying a pro-movement stance that called for awareness and support for Black bodies in America. However, while the movement held a pro-classification during the beginning stage of the movements life cycle, during the week of July 5 through July 12, 2016 the movement quickly shifted away from its pro-movement classification and into an anti-movement classification as a response to the deaths Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas Police officers. The Twitter posts analyzed in this study suggests that the emotion behind the deaths of Sterling and Castile heightened the concern for Black lives, thus leading the movement in a direction that made cops, rather than an image of unity, the key focal point for the movement.

Rhetorically speaking, the Black Lives Matter movement was created by three women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. Shortly after the movement was created, the leadership of the movement shifted. While the three women created the hashtag associated with the movement, membership within the movement is not restricted by any limitations. The use of social media as the base for the movements growth allows anyone and everyone the opportunity to take part in the movement. The movement is represented by the use of the hashtag, no matter the topic of discussion. Each post adds to

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the life cycle and message behind the movement in its entirety. It can be suggested that the message that the movement is attempting to create can become altered by the publics use of the hashtag. The manner in which the hashtag is used will represent the movement, even if it works against what the movement stood for in the beginning. This causes a divide in the movement between what the movement stood for in the beginning and what the movement stands for now.

The switch between being a pro-movement and an anti-movement is exemplified through the tweets collected. Through coding the 100 tweets, 11 of the Twitter users highlighted the pro-movement aspect of the movement in their emotional responses to the deaths of Sterling and Castile and the attack on Dallas Police officers. Twitter user Sara Saleh, @SaraSalehOz a female Arab-Australian human rights and refugee advocate, tweeted "ALTON STERLING. PHILANDO CASTILE have both been killed by police in the US within 48 hours. RIP. #BlackLivesMatter". Saleh depicts the importance of the time frame between the deaths of the two men. Saleh supports the pro-movement classification by explaining the urgency behind the actions. The Black Lives Matter hashtag was created to raise awareness for the injustices that Black bodies are currently facing. The hashtag is used to garner enough support and understanding for the cause in the hopes to bring relief to the racism that is currently occurring against Black lives. Saleh's Twitter post brings to question the scope of the Black Lives Matter movement. The deaths of Sterling and Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers in July 2016 occurred on United States soil, but out of the 100 tweets collected, there were individuals

based outside of United States borders. The reach of the deaths, the attack, and the movement has had a global effect through social media. This suggests that what began as a domestic movement has taken a global approach, which could suggest that racial discrimination could be a global issue, rather than a domestic issue.

Certified Twitter account Man Repeller, @ManRepeller created by a White Jewish woman, states "In the wake of Alton Sterling's death, the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag is vitally necessary". Attached to Man Repeller's tweet is an image depicting a black back drop with the word "Enough" written in the center. The image, not only depicting the contrast between Black and Whites attempts to explain the necessity behind the Black Lives Matter campaign.

Figure 3: Man Repeller's Tweet

The Twitter users (n=11) who responded in a way that highlights the need for the Black Lives Matter movement indicate how the movement has taken a pro-stance in the attempt to argue that Black bodies are not only discriminated against but that they also deserve to be treated as equally as White bodies. Man Repeller's tweet can also be interpreted through who the user is as a person. The account creator is a White Jewish woman, who from her public account practices her faith. The image depicted can suggest that the user relates the racial disparity occurring to instances from the past, like the Holocaust. Racial discrimination was present in World War II when Hitler chose to discriminate against Jewish individuals that led to the death of millions. Comparing the Black Lives Matter movement, and the situations that have occurred within it, to the events that occurred in World War II highlights how racial discrimination is still an issue plaguing the lives of individuals globally. The user was able to relate to the racial discrimination that the Black individuals are facing because she is a Jewish woman. While she may be a White woman, she is still a apart of a minority community where racism is still prevalent against her. Man Repeller states that in the light of Sterling's death, the hashtag #blacklivesmatter is most vital to the end of racial discrimination. The word *enough* is placed in bright white, supporting the contrast between it and the black back drop it is placed against. The Twitter user is attempting to explain that the actions presented in the death of Sterling by law enforcement is why the Black Lives Matter hashtag is needed. The user is supporting the idea that the movement is centered around police brutality rather than awareness and civil right disparities. The contrast between the

black background and the white letters suggest that the only way for the deaths of Black individuals to be rendered is for Black and White individuals to come together in a way that supports that the only way to liberate Black individuals is for everyone, regardless of race, to come together in action against the injustice. The Black Lives Matter movement is a movement that stems off the Civil Rights Movement pushing for the liberation of Black individuals.

While only 11 Twitter users upheld what the Black Lives Matter movement claims to originally support, I suggest that the Twitter users who expressed their feelings towards the situation quickly morphed the cause away from promoting awareness of the unjust situations that Black individuals face, and centered the movement solely on the issues they believe involve law enforcement. The switch between a pro-movement classification and an anti-movement classification stems from the use of the hashtag. Hashtags are used by social media users to contribute to a continuing thread of thought on the internet. The hashtag ##BlackLivesMatter is used throughout social media to not only reference the movement but in some instances to stand in solidarity with the movement. Movements are not allowed to manage the manner in which the hashtag is used by social media users. Movements lack the ability to filter through every tweet or post that involves the hashtag. There were over 3 million tweets in relation to Black Lives Matter in just the 8-day span that this study covers. The difference in opinions, beliefs, and use of the hashtag differs from user to user. The use of a hashtag as the base of a movement allows for a broader scope of support, but the tweets analyzed also suggest

that Movements must be able to allow people of all beliefs and views to use it as well, even if it is used in a negative manner. This suggests that while using the internet to base a movement upon can be beneficial in many aspects like support, awareness, and growth, it can also skew the movement's message. Through the analysis of the tweets collected for this study, I find that the ability to skew a movement through the use of a hashtag is evident. The movement, which in in the stage of inception was classified as a pro-movement, quickly switched into an anti-movement classification when those who saw the movement as something different began using the hashtag attached to their tweet in a way that impacted the movement's cause.

Supporting the anti-movement claim for the movement, Twitter user Ayan Shakur, @AyanShakur, responded to the death of Alton Sterling by tweeting "The cop who shot Alton Sterling, and still you wanna' tell me that it has nothing with racism to do? #Blacklivesmatter.". Attached to the tweet was a photo of the officer that shot and killed Sterling.

Figure 4: AyanShakur's Tweet

The photo depicts the White male officer posing beside a member of the KKK. The Twitter user responded to the death of Sterling by highlighting how the user believes that race played a negative role in the loss of life. Certified Twitter account user, Earl Butch Graves Jr CEO of Black Enterprise, responded to the death of both Sterling and Castile by tweeting "Do white people need any further evidence why black people do NOT trust law enforcement? #AltonSterling #PhilandoCastile #BlackLivesMatter". Graves fulfills Griffin (1952) claim that anti-movements attempt to argue against a current idea or institution that is currently enacted. Through his tweet, Graves is arguing that White lives fail to understand the fear the Black lives feel when interacting with law enforcement. Twitter user @TajwarShelim expresses further this idea by explaining his

views on the death of Sterling by stating "Michael Brown. Freddie Gray. Alton Sterling. How many more names until there is real change? #BlackLivesMatter". Graves and @TajwarShelim are claiming that the deaths of Sterling and Castile highlight the fear that Black bodies are faced with daily, providing the idea that their deaths should stand as proof that American law enforcement are prejudiced against Black bodies. Both users question what it will take for society to understand that White body preference and anti-Black racism is a prevalent issue to this day. The anti-movement classification is upheld through the idea that the Twitter users present by arguing that White individuals have turned a blind eye to the issues that Black bodies are facing.

The anti-movement classification of the Black Lives Matter movement is further addressed through the public's views through Twitter. Those who stand with the Black Lives Matter movement continue to argue for what they believe in, whether it be against police brutality, for awareness of racial discrimination in the US, or simply fighting for the ability to view Black lives with worth and respect. The classification of the movement helps signify the end result that the movement is attempting to create. However, with the mixed views surrounding the movement, there are multiple voices expressing a variety of emotions.

The characters within the movement, the images that the Twitter users chose to attach to their tweets, as well as the skin color depicted in the emojis chosen highlight the manner in which race and racism occurs in the movement. It appears that while the Twitter users believe that the actions that took place during the week were acted upon

through racist tendencies, even the manner in which the Twitter users express their views suggest that even they, the users, are creating a sense of race in the way they have responded to the events. However, regarding the use of the three hands emoji, the individual Twitter users did not actively choose to attach the emoji to their tweet. In response to the events that occurred during the week in July 2016, Twitter chose to attach the emoji to every tweet that used the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter. The users did not choose to attach the emoji, rather Twitter did so for them. This suggests that the interpretation taken from the use of emojis are skewed because the individual did not choose to express the solidarity sense that the emoji operate within.

Characters. When following Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism, regarding the rhetorical crisis stage that the Black Lives Matter movement, the characters present in this portion of the movement are the Twitter users themselves. Griffin (1952) explains that there are two types of characters distinguished in a movement: the aggressor orator and the defendant rhetorician. Both the aggressor orator and the defendant rhetorician play a role in both the anti and the pro-classification portion of the social movement. In the pro-movement, the aggressor orator attempts to establish the movement, but in the anti-movement, they work to destroy it. In the pro-movement the defendant rhetorician attempts to resist reform, and in the anti-movement they attempt to defend the institution at hand.

The Twitter users expressing their views on the events that unfolded take on the roles of both the aggressor orator and the defendant rhetorician in the classification of the

movement. During the week of July 5 through July 12, 2016, the Twitter responses

suggest that the social movement is attempting to argue for the acceptance of racism and

white supremacy as an idea, but at the same time provide strength as an anti-movement

by persuading the public to reject the idea that racism no longer exists. The Twitter users

who voiced their opinions on the events that took place in July 2016 suggest that the

movement is being pulled in two different directions. While the movement as a whole is

urging awareness and persuasion of the overarching issue, the movement being voiced

through Twitter users is urging for urgent action, no matter the means it takes to do so or

the result.

Just as Griffin (1952) suggests, the Twitter users who responded to the seven

deaths take on the role of both the aggressor orator and the defendant rhetorician in the

movement. In this portion of the Black Lives Matter movement, where the movement

stands as an anti-movement, the aggressor orators are portrayed by the Twitter users who

have morphed the movement away from one of awareness and into one of emotion and

misunderstanding. Twitter user Phoebe Wahl, @PhoebeWahl, responded to the deaths

with the tweet stating "Posting again, for Alton Sterling. #blacklivesmatter". Attached to

the tweet is an image depicting six Black individuals standing behind a sign that says

"Black Lives Matter".

Figure 5: Phoebe Wahl's Tweet

One of the individuals is holding a sign expressing the phrase "NO JUSTICE, NO

PEACE". Twitter user Phoebe Wahl is calling for individuals to remain vigilant in the

struggle against law enforcement and the American justice system. Certified account

Twitter user Noisey, @NoiseyMusic, relayed the message from artist ScHoolboy when

he explains "Two cowards in the car, they just there to film saying black lives matter,

shoulda died with him!" ScHoolboy further states that "Enemies gotta bob and weave,

gangbangin' like we stand for something, while Alton Sterling getting killed for nothing."

Through the Twitter user Noisey's highlight of ScHoolboy's feelings, the account is

promoting the use of violence against law enforcement. ScHoolboy explains that the

United States law enforcement is the enemy in this situation, but also that those who

simply record the deaths of Black individuals and post them to social media, or those who

simply express that "Black Lives Matter" but fail to act upon the cause are just as guilty

as the law enforcement in this situation. The Twitter users who are calling for further

violent action and aggressive response to the movement fulfill the role of the aggressor

orators in this portion of the Black Lives Matter movement as an anti-movement because

they are attempting to destroy the institution that is opposing them in the movement,

represented in this portion of the movement by members of law enforcement.

The Twitter users who reported on the Dallas Police Chief Brown plays the role

of the defendant rhetorician in this situation. Chief Brown is attempting to defend the

need for police officers by explaining that those who are effected the most by the deaths

of Castile and Sterling, the defendant rhetoricians should turn their emotion into action.

The Tweets that discuss the call to action provided by the Police Chief favorably suggest

that they too believe in the same call to action. Twitter users, like the certified account

BuzzFeedNews who responded to the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the Dallas Police

Officers play a significant role as the defendant rhetorician in this portion of the anti-

movement. The defendant rhetorician in this portion of the Black Lives Matter movement

are those who propose a resolution to the issue. For instance, Twitter user,

BuzzFeedNews, the defendant rhetorician in this specific instance of this movement, has

over 949,000 followers. The Twitter page uses their popularity to report on what they feel

is considered unique news. In response to the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the Dallas

attack, rather than voicing anger or grief, the site chose to respond with a report on an individual, Police Chief Brown, calling for unity within the country, rather than separation. The defendant rhetoricians are attempting to defend the institution presented in this portion of the movement which is represented by members of law enforcement and the original cause in which the Black Lives Matter movement was founded upon.

Those who offer resolution in bringing unity and awareness to the public are those who are attempting to defend the cause of the movement. However, as portrayed through the 100 Twitter responses collected for this analysis, there were seventy-one aggressor orators which heavily outweighs the twenty-nine defendant rhetoricians. Through this analysis is can be suggested that emotion and the lack of leadership within the portion of this movement has resulted in transformation of the movement's cause from one of awareness to one of anger and violence between Black individuals and members of law enforcement within the country.

Images. Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism explains that the movement moves through stages during its life line with the help of its characters, the aggressor orator and defendant rhetoricians. Through the analysis of the 100 random tweets given by Twitter users responding to the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers suggest that the movement is operating through the rhetorical crisis stage in its life cycle. The rhetorical crisis occurs when opposing views are brought against the movement. The responding tweets provided by Twitter users were filled with images, hashtags, and emojis. The Black Lives Matter movement, as a social movement, arguably

operates predominantly through the use of social media. It can be suggested that the use of images, hashtags, and emojis by the Twitter users responding to the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter provides a certain uniqueness to the operating function of the movement through social media. It appears that the use of images, hashtags, and emojis allows the Twitter user to express themselves with more than just words, but rather provide a larger sense of emotion through the tweets attachments.

The images attached to Twitter user's responses to the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the Dallas officers project varying levels of emotion within the movement. Certified Twitter account user Jordan, @jordandiamonds, tweeted "Philando Castile would've been 33 years old today. Happy Birthday. #SayHisName #BlackLivesMatter". Attached to the tweet is a collage of four images of Philando Castile. Two of the four images are of Castile taking a selfie of himself dressed and ready for what appears to be his job.

Figure 6: Jordan's Tweet

One image is of Castile smiling for the camera in a green collared shirt and jeans, while the final image is of the man in slacks, a white button down, and a tie. The images express a sense of innocence for Castile, and the hashtag #SayHisName attached to the images suggests that the Twitter user is attempting to paint Castile as the victim in this situation. It appears that the Twitter user is attempting to provide the public with an image that they could best relate to. The user is attempting to humanize the victim to initiate a stronger sense of support for the idea that Castile was killed without proper cause.

Twitter user Guy Cecil, @guycecil, tweeted "Philando Castile was a role model to hundreds of kids. #BlackLivesMattter" with an image of Castile and another Black woman dressed in what appears to be a uniform for a chef. Attached to the image is the

description "Philando Castile Was a Role Model to Hundreds of Kids. The police shooting victim memorized the names of 500 students and their food allergies".

Figure 7: Guy Cecil's Tweet

The image portrays Castile as a contributing member of society who saved the lives of children when it came to their food preparation. The manner in which they described Castile as a "police shooting victim" suggests that he was an innocent victim, rather than a criminal, only furthering the negative representation of law enforcement officers.

Certified Twitter account user, The Source Magazine, @TheSource, responded to the death of Alton Sterling by tweeting "Alton Sterling, 37, Killed By Baton Rouge Police for Selling Cd's #BlackLivesMatter". Attached to the tweet by The Source

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Magazine is an image of Sterling smiling in a family photo with his family, including his white and three children.

Figure 8: The Source Magazine's Tweet

The image depicts Sterling, his wife, and two young sons in stark white shirts, while his toddler daughter is wearing red. The image is captioned at the bottom with the phrase "Justice for #AltonSterling". The Source Magazine claims that Sterling was killed innocently because he was selling CD's, rather than explaining that officers were responding to a call about a man in a red shirt threatening a man outside of a convenience store with a gun. The Source Magazine, with over 546,000 followers of Twitter is

attempting to paint Sterling as innocently as they possibly can. The image of Sterling

with his family provides the public with a positive photo of the man who was believed to

be mercilessly killed by police officers. The stark white shirt against the man's Black

skin in the image also offers a sense of innocence for his being in the eye of the public.

The Source Magazine is attempting to use their popularity on Twitter to influence the

feelings towards the death of Alton Sterling, painting a negative image of law

enforcement officers.

In response to both the deaths of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, Twitter user

Beyonce Titan, @BeyonceTitan, responded with "R.I.P Alton Sterling and Philando

Castile, our prayers and thoughts are with your families #BlackLviesMatter". Attached to

the tweet is an image of a Black man.
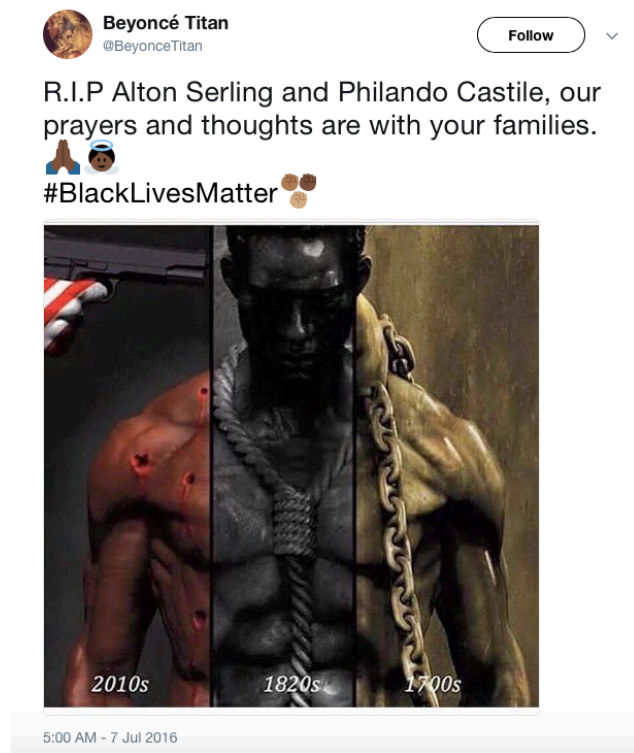
The image is split into three equal sections. Analyzing the image from right to left, the

first section of the image represents the right side of the man's body wrapped in a chain.

At the bottom of this section of the image is the date "1700s". The middle section of the

image depicts the man's face solemnly pointing towards the ground. Around the man's

neck is a loosely tied noose with the date "1820s" placed at the bottom. The final section

on the left side depicts the right side of the man's body riddled with bullet holes and

blood. The bottom of this image is paired with the date "2010s". At the top of this section

of the image is a gun pointing to the man's head while the hand around the trigger is

draped in the American flag suggesting that America is pulling the trigger on the Black

man. In all three sections of this image, the Black man is portrayed as sculpted with muscle from his shoulders and arms to his abdomen. The muscled effect that is portrayed through the man in the image suggests that even when faced with adversity at the hands of American institutions, the Black man remains strong and persistent to survive. The Twitter user who expressed their views on the deaths of Sterling and Castile are insinuating that Black lives, like in the past, will continue to prevail against the system.

Emojis. In 2015, Apple released racially diverse emotions that allows users to insert race into texts and tweets when they feel it to be necessary (Tutt, 2015). Where the emojis used to be portrayed as yellow faces with black eyes, users can now change the emoji to represent one of six different shades of skin. The use of emojis through the tweets analyzed for this study are prevalent to the expression of the Twitter user.

Out of the 100 tweets analyzed, 10 emojis were present. Emojis representing emotion were present in the Twitter users' responses to the events that unraveled in July 2016. The basic emotion emotions such as the emoji face with tears was presented three times, the emoji face represented anger was found once, and the confused emoji was present once in the tweets. The broken red heart emoji was presented twice. Racially driven emotions were also presented in the tweet responses. Twitter user Johanna, @C0nservativeGal, is a White woman who tweeted about how the Dallas Police Chief David Brown expressed the need for Black Lives Matter supports to join the Police Force before throwing judgement at officers. Attached to her tweet is the three fists representing

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shades of Black skin, as well as three white hand emojis: the fist, the hand clap

movement, and the thumbs up emoji.

Figure 10: Johanna's Tweet
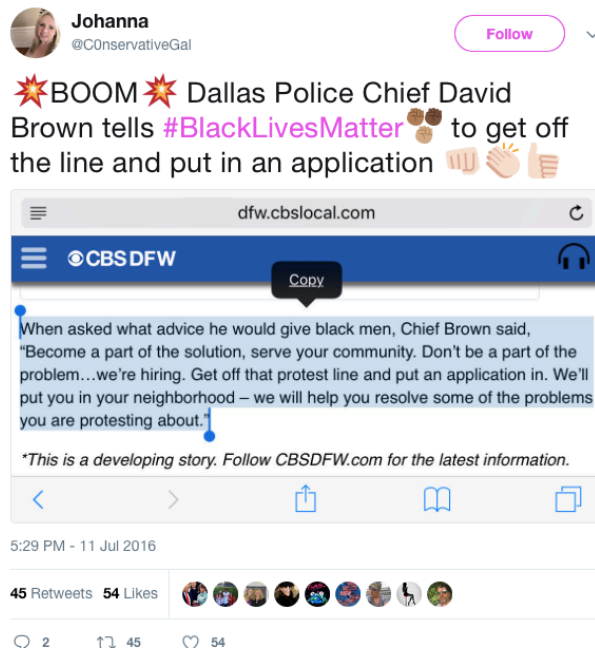
Johanna is expressing her White support for the movement as well as the words presented

by the Dallas Police Department. Attached to the tweet by Beyonce Titan and the image

depicting the strength of Black men over time, are three emojis: a pair of hands placed in

prayer position, an angel, and three fists in a circle.

Figure 9 Beyonce Titan's Tweet
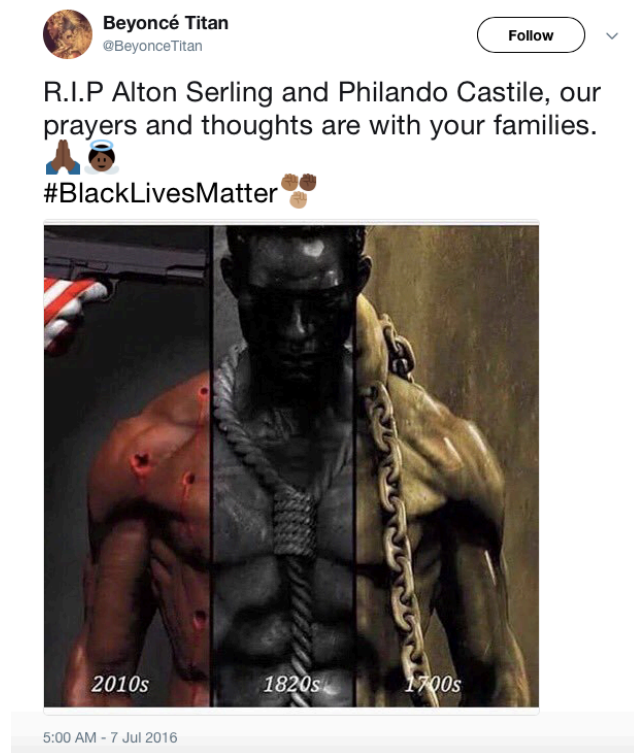
The praying hands and the angel are both represented with Black skin, and the three fists

are three different shades of what can be considered Black skin. Due to Twitters' choice

in attaching the three -fisted emoji to every tweet that tagged the hashtag in their post, the

feeling expressed by the Twitter users who used it in their tweet isn't as reliable. The

emoji gives a sense of unity, but the tweets portrayed do not follow suit.

Consummation

Through analyzing the tweets that revolve around the events that took place

between July 5 through July 12, 2016, it is suggested that the Black Lives Matter

movement worked through its rhetorical crisis' stage of the movements' life. Through

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analyzing the artifact, the consummation stage of the movement cannot be discussed. The movement has yet to reach success legally, but the movement has successfully brought awareness to many regarding the racial discrimination that is suggested. Through the analysis of the tweets, it appears that the movement is still attempting to argue for what they believe in.

Griffin (1952) explains that during the final phase of the social movement, the period of consummation, the social movement will begin to fizzle out. Through the analysis of the 100 Twitter responses to the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the Dallas Police officers it is impossible to determine whether or not the movement has reached the consummation phase. The week of July 5 to July 12, 2016 are found within the second phase of what Griffin (1952) explains that social movements move through in criticism. The Black Lives Matter movement presently, in July 2017, remains to be a phrase that filtrates American media often. On June 16, 2017, almost one year after the death of Philando Castile, the officer responsible for his death, Jeronimo Yanez of Minnesota, was found not guilty of second-degree manslaughter (Ellis & Kirkos, 2017). In response to the verdict, protests formed at the Minnesota State Capitol and began to march to a nearby Cathedral shutting down Interstate 94 (Kennedy, 2017). On June 27, 2017 10 months after the death of Alton Sterling, federal prosecutors announced that there was not enough evidence to warrant civil rights charges against the two police officers, Blane Salamoni and Howie Lake II, in the death of Alton Sterling (Almasy, Yan, Lynch, & Levenson, 2017). The lack of charges against the two officers resulted in protests in the

streets of Louisiana. The Black Lives Matter movement has been alive since 2012, and in 2017 it continues to make waves in the country.

Summary

This chapter applied Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism through the lens of Critical Race Theory to analyze 100 tweets from Twitter users who used the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the Dallas Police officer attack in July 2016. The Black Lives Matter movement, while still alive and flourishing in July 2017, operated through the second phase of a social movement during the events that occurred in July 2016. I suggest that during the rhetorical crisis of the movement, the switch between the movements classification from a pro-movement to an anti-movement is due to the wide range of individuals who can use the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Using social media for social movement purposes creates opportunities for growth and future awareness of the movement's cause, but it also restricts the movement from dictating the manner in which the movement is discussed. The movements concept becomes based in the hands of the Twitter, or other social media site, users who discuss it. The Twitter users' posts using images, emotion, hashtags, and emojis in relation to the events that occurred over the 8-day span discussed project how social media has the power to either extend the task of a movement, or potentially alter it completely with the way they use it in their posts.

Chapter Five discusses my findings from this analysis to provide answers to the research questions that I have proposed through this study. The chapter explores the

implications found through the analysis of the Twitter posts involved in the time frame

presented, as well as present limitations that are present through the topic, method, and

analysis of this study. Chapter five explores the opportunities for future research, as well.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

For this rhetorical analysis, 100 tweets were collected from July 5 through July

12, 2016, from Twitter. The tweets collected are used as a representation of the public's

response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas police

officers in July 2016. The tweets collected serve as the artifact for the analysis conducted

using the theoretical framework provided through Leland Griffin's (1952) social

movement criticism. The Social movement criticism is accompanied by a critical race

theory lens. Chapter Five provides an in-depth discussion of the analysis conducted on

the artifact. This chapter answers the two research questions posed through the analysis,

discusses the limitations present, and the future research that can be conducted in

response to the issues discussed in this analysis.

RQ1: What perceptions about police brutality against Black Americans are

reflected by Twitter users who link their tweets to the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter?

Out of the 100 tweets for this artifact that used the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, 24

of them utilized the words "police" or "cop". Out of the 24 that directly addressed law

enforcement, the perceptions of police brutality were present in 14 of them. The

remaining 10 tweets that addressed police officers viewed law enforcement positively

while still supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. The Twitter users who posted

their negative views involving law enforcement negatively associated emotions like

anger, fear, and disgust in relation to the police brutality they have witnessed. The tweets

that focused on police brutality suggested a negative representation of police officers as

individuals, normalized the act of police brutality, and found that the situation between

law enforcement and racial discrimination is grounded in discrimination and the use of

White supremacy.

Negative Representation of Police Officers Character

Out of the 24 tweets that specifically related to police officers, 10 were seen

positively while 14 negatively viewed law enforcement and the police brutality they

believed occurred. The Twitter users are portraying the officers as negative individuals in

character. As explored in the analysis, the Black Lives Matter movement was a

movement founded out of love for Black individuals. The lack of consistency in the use

of the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, created the switch between what the movement began

as, and into what the movement is now. The tweets that present a negative representation

of police officers paint law enforcement as a whole, rather than discuss the few cops that

were a part of the problem. Due to the lack of restriction and management in terms of the

hashtag, through the tweets collected the Black Lives Matter movement shifted from a

movement grounded in awareness, acceptance, and love, has become a movement that

expresses hate towards law enforcement. The movement was created to highlight the

discrimination that Black individuals are facing, but the way the hashtag is being used

through the tweets collected, it appears in the tweets I analyzed that a common theme was

the rage expressed toward police officers. Rather than imaging the police officers as

individuals who are there to help, or give relief to a situation, the twitter users suggest

that they find police officers presence to be negative.

Normalization of Police Brutality

The tweets analyzed suggest that Twitter users believe that police brutality has

become a normal instance in society today. Just as Critical Race Theory suggests, Twitter

users have put themselves in the narrative of events. The tweets that express the fear that

individuals have regarding police brutality suggest that the users feel as if they too can

become a victim of police brutality. Critical Race Theory posits that when faced with

racial discrimination, the users will address their views through emotions or through a

narrative. The users who expressed their fears, doubts, and misunderstandings of police

brutality through their tweets are doing so by depicting why they feel the way they do.

Grounded in Racism and the Belief in White Supremacy

During the 8-day span addressed in this study, I've suggested that the Black Lives

Matter movement is operating through the rhetorical crisis stage in its life cycle.

The stories that the users are suggesting paint police officers as villains in the

story who are corrupted by racism, rather than in a heroic role. Critical race theory

suggests that individuals who are faced with racism use storytelling to name one's own

reality (Rose, 2017). The storytelling aspect of critical race theory is used to illuminate

the individual experience with racial oppression, and the Twitter users who are

expressing their feelings towards police brutality are effectively fulfilling the role. The

tweets analyzed work against the traditional roles that police officers normally play. Rather than being the good guy there to save the individual, the tweets suggest that the police officer is now the villain there to make things worse. The rhetoric used against police officers through the tweets can have lasting effects on generations to come. When Twitter users begin to see police officers negatively, rather than positively, the trust based within law enforcement becomes tested. If the negative rhetoric surrounding police officers continues, there will be a possibility that individuals who are pulled over by a police officer automatically emote emotions like fear, anger, and violent tendencies, rather than the sense of relief, joy, and understanding that police officers should enact.

The perceptions of police brutality have become normalized in society, and that is something grounded in racism and the idea of White supremacy. Without limitations or restrictions on the use of #BlackLivesMatter, the movement's image has the ability to be reconstructed by the Twitter users. The lack of direction present in the movement is caused by the lack of movement identity. Traditionally, social movements have been characterized by a few well-known voices. However, in the case of Black Lives Matter, the multiplicity of voices expressing views on social media results in a variety of concerns rather than a single focus.

The use of the hashtag, #blacklivesmatter, on Twitter offers the Twitter uses ample opportunity to not only engage in the discussion collectively through the hashtag thread, but at the same time allow their tweet to reach as many people as possible. The tweets that were collected were from public, open accounts. Anyone on Twitter has

access to the tweets that were posted by the twitter users. The reach that the tweets can have across the Twitter platform is what makes Twitter the stronger social media site to analyze for this study. Tweets can be seen by millions, unlike the use of Facebook, Snapchat, or Tumblr. Twitter allows for those posting their opinions on the sitatuion a chance to reach as broad of an audience as possible, which is why the Black Lives Matter movement took to Twitter, through the use of the hashtag, to gain as many followers with as much support as possible.

RQ2: From July 5, 2016 – July 12, 2016, how did the tweets pertaining to the Black Lives Matter Movement compare to those pertaining to Police Officers?

Out of the 100 tweets collected, 24 tweets focused specifically on police officers. The remaining 76 tweets focus more on the deaths of Sterling and Castile. Each of the 100 tweets were specifically chosen for their use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, meaning that each of the 100 tweets pertained to the Black Lives Matter movement. While each tweet pertained to the hashtag, the tweets each held its own unique sense of emotion on the subject. Regarding the Black Lives Matter movement the tweets collected represented three areas: support for police officer efforts, scattered emotions regarding the loss of life, and a blanketed sense of racism and prejudice.

Police Officer Support

Through the analysis conducted on the positive tweets in relation to law enforcement, I found that 2 Twitter users were tweeting about the Dallas Police Chief's call to action that asked the Black Lives Matter protestors to apply to become a part of

the police force, rather than calling for its demise. It appears that the two tweets involving the Dallas attack in this instance were positive towards police officers themselves, not the attack in Dallas. The Twitter users who tweeted positively about law enforcement in response to the attack also called for the support of the Black Lives Matter movement. It can be suggested that out of the 100 tweets collected, the two Twitter users who offered a positive view on both law enforcement and the message that the Black Lives Matter movement preached for are suggesting a solution to the torn emotion surrounding the topic that has occurred. The remaining 98 Twitter users only represented one of the two sides, whether it be to stand with law enforcement, or to stand for what the Black Lives Matter movement is all about. The two tweets positively portraying police officers provide a positive image of the Black Lives Matter movement. The issue arising here is that out of the 100 tweets, there were only two in the collected batch Even though there were only two tweets that expressed positive attitudes about police officers, it does suggest that these Twitter users reflect the original claims of the Black Lives Matter movement. The two Twitter users are attempting to preach for equality for Black individuals, but they are also trying to do so in a way that doesn't call for the destruction of reputation of law enforcement. Critical race theory suggests that the two users are attempting to present an opposing image for the movement to work through. The image created depicts the Black Lives Matter movement positively in a way that pushes for a stronger sense of change and awareness. Tweets like these, in positive response to the

attack on Dallas police officers, relate back to the pro-movement classification that Griffin (1952)'s criticism.

Torn Emotion in the Rhetorical Crisis Phase

Through analyzing the movement's life cycle through Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism, I found that during the week of July 5 through July 12, 2016 the movement was operating through its rhetorical crisis stage in its life. During the rhetorical crisis portion of the movement's life, opposing ideas are presented by opposing group with alternate views. The tweets that represented the public's response to the deaths of Sterling and Castile, as well as the attack on Dallas police officers, were torn between two opposing views. 10 Twitter users were in support of law enforcement, while the other fourteen were not. The Twitter users are torn by their emotions involving the events that took place, suggesting the impact that social media continues to have on the scope and focus of the movement. The opposing views created challenges the movement against itself. The ##BlackLivesMatter hashtag is used differently throughout Twitter, and due to the difference, the views created seem to provide many views rather than a central message.

The Twitter responses collected in relation to the events that took place in July 2016 suggest that during the Rhetorical Crisis life cycle that the Black Lives Matter movement was experiencing a re-definition of goals and purposes. The tweets that pertain to police officers are torn between a mix of support and disdain for law enforcement as an entity. As for the remaining seventy-six tweets that pertain to the Black Lives Matter

movement, emotions like grief, confusion, and anger best depict the state in which the Twitter users have found themselves regarding the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers. The tweets suggest that through their responses to the events that took place, rather than coming together as a movement, the tweets analyzed suggest that the movement began to segregate further between those who believe in the original cause of awareness for the movement, and those who believe that the movement should be dedicated to the destruction of the current state of law enforcement within the United States. The Twitter posts collected suggest that the movement's lack of identity has added to the lack of direction within the movement. The tweets pertaining to the Black Lives Matter movement and those pertaining to law enforcement carry stark differences in emotion between the two. Twitter users are expressing their own personal views on the events that took place by expressing their opinions in the form of narratives on Twitter.

Just as critical race theory suggests, the Twitter users humanized the victims of racism through their tweets and belief. Twitter users felt that law enforcement and Black Lives Matter protesters should work together, while at the same time users expressed their distaste for law enforcement. As explained by the critical race theory, Erica May Scherzer (presumably a White woman from the information collected form her Twitter account) states that she, as a White woman, will never understand the emotions that Black individuals are feeling. The Twitter user creates a narrative presenting her personal

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feelings on the situation, which explains from her standpoint as a White woman that she is empathetic for the Black community.

Narratives within the tweets collected were also used to humanize the victims in the attack in an attempt to highlight the issues that have arisen between the argument between Black Lives Matter movement and police brutality.

Bandwagon Racism and Prejudice

The final conclusion, based upon the analysis of the 100 tweets collected in response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers suggests that the Twitter users are only projecting a overarching view of racism and prejudice about Black individuals and police officers, specifically in regard to White supremacy in law enforcement. The lack of previous correlation between the three events suggests that the idea of racism and prejudice against police officers expressed through Twitter and other social media sites is the strongest, link between the three.

Alton Sterling was killed in Baton Rouge Louisiana, and Philando Castile was killed in Falcon Heights, Minnesota. Both Sterling and Castile were shot and killed by local law enforcement. Even though the deaths of the two men occurred miles away from Dallas, TX, the officers in Dallas were the ones targeted by sniper Micah Johnson on July 7, 2016. Johnson opened fire on police officers at a Black Lives Matter protest that was being orchestrated in response to the deaths of Sterling and Castile. The tweets that responded to the events from the week in July 2016 with positive emotions involving law

enforcement were responding to the injustice they felt that the Dallas police officers were undergoing at the time.

Analyzing this through the Critical Race Theory lens, it can be suggested that the Twitter users who feel negative towards the police officers who were involved in the deaths of the two Black men have created a bandwagon effect over law enforcement in its entirety. Rather than calling for justice for the two Black men killed, the Twitter users are instead depicting law enforcement with an overall negative image in society. Rather than taking satiation by situation, the Twitter responses suggest that the Twitter users are failing to look at each event as a single occurrence, but rather they are using a blanket effect that suggests each instance involving police officers and Black individuals will result in the same acts of inappropriate force used by police officers. The Twitter users suggest that prejudice against police officers by Black individuals, and police officers racism towards Black individuals has been something that has occurred for longer than the life of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Out of the 100 tweets collected for this analysis, when comparing the tweets that pertained to the Black Lives Matter movement and the ones that pertained to police officers it can be suggested that there has been an emotional divide created by the events that took place on July 5 through July 7, 2016. The emotional divide between those who expressed grief for the lives lost (i.e., Sterling, Castile, and the Dallas police officers killed) and those who feel vengeful for the actions that resulted in the deaths of each individual. By comparing the tweets together, it appears that while there is a sense of

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support for police officers, there is also an emotional divide created between the two opposing ideas that has characterized the rhetorical crisis portion of the Black Lives Matter movement's life cycle. The analysis of comparisons between the tweets also found that through the Twitter users' responses, the users created a sense of racism upon Black lives, and an automatic prejudice against law enforcement as a whole. The Twitter users failed to take each event as an event that stood in solidarity, but rather connected each event in a way that suggests each situation between a Black individual and a police officer will end in a negative consequence.

Research Limitations

While this study offers an in-depth examination of how 100 Twitter users have responded to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers in July 2016, limitations are present in terms of the researcher and the tools used to perform the research. The limitations within the research conducted for this thesis are found in the authors' personal identification, the lack of a larger pool serving as representation for the public, and the restrictions placed on the data collected.

This study was conducted by an individual who self identifies as a White female with a lack of any relation to the Black community. My standpoint as a 20-something college educated White woman from a rural region of the United states has given me limited exposure to racism. Personally, I was raised in a town with very few Black individuals. There were two Black individuals in my high school. I never witnessed any type of discrimination against them from school authority. The only type of racism

against Black individuals that I have witnessed has occurred through the media, or personal stories from friends that I have met in my 20's. My lack of exposure to racism physically spawned my fascination with what I have witnessed through television and social media.

The lack of a larger pool for data collected serves as the second limitation in this study. Being a rhetorical analysis, the artifact chosen for this study was 100 randomly generated tweets collected by a social media management and analytics software that contained the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. The 100 tweets chosen are used as a representation of the public response to the deaths of Sterling, Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers. The three events in particular were broadcasted by various media outlets, garnering recognition nationwide. To use a mere 100 tweets as a representation of the entire public response limits the generalizability of the results of my analysis.

The way data was collected also provides limitation for the study. For this study, Twitter accounts that are made public to the web were the only responses collected. The lack of availability of tweets due to privacy settings on the social media site failed to provide a larger pool of data to pull from for analysis. If the study could have collected data from various social media sites, and had access to posts that were private as well as public could have further provided a stronger sense of understanding for the author in terms of analyzing the public response to the events that took place. The only restriction placed on the Tweets collected was that the post has the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter attached. The study could have further explored a better understanding of the Twitter

users' responses to law enforcement if the author had placed a key word restriction on the tweets that linked 50 tweets to law enforcement, and 50 to Black Lives Matter in general. The study was also limited in the analysis of the responses from Twitter users. Twitter restricts their tweets to being 140 characters or less. The Twitter users had to condense their feelings to brief snippets, rather than lengthy appeals. I was also restricted to relying on the Twitter user's self-descriptions on Twitter, which may have no indicated their racial identity accurately.

The lack of filters placed upon Twitter user geographical location also limited the scope of this study. The Twitter users chosen did not have to be located in the United States to have their tweet selected for this study. The tweets expressed from foreign users fails to provide a sense of the way Americans are feeling about the events that occurred. The outreach of users from different countries clouded the goal that the author had in building a representation of what the American people felt towards the events that happened.

Future Research

Future research can stem from this study in terms of social media use in social movements, the perceptions of White supremacy in law enforcement, and the evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement. This study provides opportunities for researchers to gain a better understanding of how race is perceived currently in a country that begs for equality.

Future research in the area of social movements use of social media stems directly from this study. The Black Lives Matter movement operates predominantly through the use of social media. The movement is fueled off the use of hashtags, likes, shares, and retweets through social media to garner membership and support for the cause in which they are attempting to aid. The growth of the movement through social media could easily be compared to the evolving nature of the Feminist Movement, especially through a social media lens. The Feminist Movement has been evolving for decades, and continues to be a movement addressed presently. The use of social media within the movement, as compared to the use of social media in the Black Lives Matter movement could offer a deeper depiction as to how social media benefits the movement.

The exploration in perceptions of White supremacy in law enforcement could also be further explored by researchers. This study found that Twitter users believed White supremacy impacted the actions provided by police officers. However, the tweets that were analyzed often showed Black police officers, such as the Dallas Police Chief. The images tweeted in relation to the Dallas attack depicted predominately Black officers. Even though Black officers were present in the responses, the Twitter users still expressed their belief that White racism against Black individuals was the root of the issue presented. Future research exploring the public view of Black officers and police brutality could possibly offer a better understanding of the public's view of law enforcement without the guise of racism associated with it.

This study also proposes the idea that future research could be conducted on the Black Lives Matter movement's final life cycle stage, consummation, as presented by Griffin (1952). This study suggested that the events that took place in July 2016 exemplified how the movement was in its second phase, the rhetorical crisis. The study could not discuss the final stage of the movement because a year later, in July 2017, the Black Lives Matter movement continues to appear as a trending topic through social media.

The lack of consideration of the role identity plays within Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism needs to be addressed with further research. Future study could extend or offer a reconceptualization of social movement criticism. Social media users self-identify as Black Lives Matter supporters by using the hashtag, and future research analyzing the implications of this could benefit the way individuals use hashtags in the future. Hashtags are ever growing through social media, and the threads that they create can offer an insight into how the public is responding the situations that have occurred, just as this study has done by looking at the events that occurred in July 2016.

Conclusion

This current study researched the influence that Twitter posts had on the perception of the Black Lives Matter movement and police brutality in response to the deaths of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and the attack on Dallas police officers. The purpose of this study was to analyze 100 tweets that were collected through Twitter in relation to the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, during an 8-day span in July 2016, to gain an

understanding of how the public felt about the events that unfolded. I used Griffin's (1952) social movement criticism through a lens of critical race theory to interpret my analysis. The results of this study suggest competing views between the movement's image, cause, and availability of resources. Results indicated that the Twitter users worked through their emotions regarding the deaths of the two men, and the attack on Dallas police officers by expressing their views on social media.

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