**‘ONLY PPL RIOTING IN STL ARE THE POLICE’: Activists’ responses to accusations of violence in the Ferguson unrest.**

**Abstract**:

In the last decade, protests against police brutality toward People of African Descent have gained widespread support through the Black Lives Matter movement. However, in some cases where protests turn into civil unrest and include episodes of violence, it allowed the movement’s opponents to label them as ‘riots’ and thus to shift the debate from the source of the protesters’ grievances to the nature of the protests. In turn, activists have countered these claims, including through a prominent use of social media. The usage of social platforms such as Twitter by social movements allows us to examine activists’ different points of view on contentious events as they unfold. While previous studies on civil unrest often focus on explaining the resort to violence during protests, this paper explores how activists respond to attempts to delegitimize their protest as violent riots. Using Stanly Cohen’s work on official accounts of denial, this paper will demonstrate how activists utilized different types of denial to counterclaim the labeling protests as ‘riots’ during the Ferguson unrest in August 2014. To examine activists’ accounts, a qualitative analysis of 4201 tweets by three crowdsources elites who participated in the protests was made. The findings reveal that activists used two types of denial: implicatory and interpretive, along with a positive representation of the protests. Focusing on activists’ accounts on Twitter, this paper offers a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing movements’ counter-claims in similar events.

Key Words: *Accounts, Civil Unrest*, *Denial, Ferguson, Twitter, Violence*

# Introduction

In the last decade, protests against state-sanction violence toward People of African Descent has gained wide support globally through the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. However, in some cases where protests turn into civil unrest and included episodes of violence (e.g., clashes with police, looting), it allowed movement’s opponents to shift the debate from the source of the protester’s grievances to the nature of the protests and to label them as ‘riots’, in order to de-legitimize the movement. This debate leads activists to face a crucial dilemma: while they cannot claim that no violence occurred, as they will be denounced as unreliable, they also cannot condone it, as they would be blamed for inciting a riot; at the same time, if they condemn it, they are risking reinforcing their opponents’ narrative which distracts from their original claims. In order to understand how activists navigate these dilemmas this paper explores the accounts of leading activists, and shows how they used intricate forms of denial: acknowledging violence but isolating it, minimizing its significance and shifting focus to other issues.

Using Stanly Cohen’s (2001) work on official accounts of denial, this paper aims to demonstrate how activists turned to tweeter to counterclaim the labeling of the protests against police brutality as violent riots during the Ferguson unrest in August 2014. During 17-days[[1]](#endnote-1), protesters utilized various accounts of denial to counter the labelling of the protest as violent, expose racially motivated state-sanction violence against their community, justify their grievances and mobilize support. In order to examine the use of accounts of denial by activists, a qualitative analysis of 4201 tweets made by three crowdsources elites who participated in the protests between August 9 and 25, 2014, was made.

While Cohen's work on account of denial has been mainly used to analyze official discourse of denial by governments and corporations responding to allegations of human rights violations and crimes (e.g., al Weswasi, 2019; Bryant et al., 2018), this paper demonstrates how activists use similar denial techniques to expose racial discrimination and state-sanction violence and mobilize support. Therefore, this paper uses Cohen's framework in a way that has mostly been overlooked. Moreover, while the existing literature on civil unrest has thus far focused on explaining the resort to violence during contentious events, this paper contributes by focusing instead on analyzing activists' outlook on these events. Moreover, this paper also focuses on social media, a sphere that has become the main arena for debate between social movements and their adversaries. As this dynamic of claims and counterclaims in relation to violence during protests has been repeated in many cases during the last decade in the US and globally, this case study also offers a theoretical and methodological framework for analysis of such events.

In the first two sections, I will explain the theoretical framework on accounts of denial and review past research on civil unrest. The third section will briefly review the events that led to the Ferguson unrest in August 2014. After introducing my data and methods, I will present my analysis of the main accounts identified in my material.

# Theoretical framework: Accounts of denial

The concept of accounts has been the focus of various sociological studies. Terri Orbuch (1997) divides the use of accounts by sociologists into two. The first is to explain behaviors that are deviant from social norms. The second emphasizes the different ways in which people explain events while putting less emphasis on the ways of constructing accounts. This paper aligns with the second approach and examines how protesters utilized their accounts to explain violence while navigating between addressing contentious issues.

Erving Goffman (1959, 1971) explored the usage of accounts to protect one’s image or to sustain a good impression. Goffman views accounts as a part of remedial work that function ’to change the meanings that otherwise might be given to an act, transforming what could be seen as offensive into what can be seen as acceptable‘ (Goffman, 1971, p. 109). According to Goffman, a ‘good’ account is one that has successfully altered the offensive meaning of the act. More explicitly, Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman (1968) define accounts as ‘a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior whether that behavior is his own or that of others‘ (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46). Scott and Lyman classify two main categories of accounts: Excuses and Justifications, both functions to neutralize an act or its questionable results. Accordingly, accounts are not simply explanations since they must relate to untoward acts.

Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957) explored these techniques and examined the spectrum of responses for which delinquency is accounted. These responses include: the denial of responsibility: claiming the act is out of the individual control; the denial of injury: questioning the severity of the act; The denial of the victim: claiming that there is no actual victim; condemnation of the condemners: delegitimizing those who disapprove of the act; And finally, the appeal to higher loyalties: claiming the deviant act is done for a greater cause or due to more pressing causes (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This spectrum of accounts is used to neutralize deviant behavior and directly relates to internalized norms that allow this behavior to be accepted by its performer.

Building on these theories of naturalization and denial techniques, Stanley Cohen (2001) further investigates official accounts by governments and their responses to atrocities and human rights violations. Cohen distinguished between three forms of official accounts of denial: literal, interpretive, and implicatory denials. *Literal denial* is when governments completely deny the facts of which they are accused, asserting nothing has happened. While authoritarian regimes usually use this type of denial, it can also be found in democratic countries. *Interpretive Denial* occurs when officials admit that something has happened but denying the interpretive framework of the accusations. This form of denial includes partially admitting some of the accusations but identifying them as singular or out-of-the-ordinary events. Interpretive denial can also be achieved through using euphemism and raising the issue around the legality of the actions. Other Interpretive denial techniques include denial of responsibility, framing the act as a countermove, or self-defense. Interpretive denial is not denying the occurrence but rationalizing, justifying, or evading the accusations.

Finally*, Implicatory Denial* is when the implications of the acts are denied. Cohen argues that it focuses not on the knowledge of the acts itself but on how this knowledge is being used. This type of denial may be achieved in several manners such as appealing to higher loyalty: things had to be done as there was no other option; denial of the victim: blaming the other side, contextualization, and claiming uniqueness of circumstances; defending accusations by arguing that there is a need to understand the full scope of the situation and denying universal standards, and advantageous comparisons; comparing moral compass such as accusing the accusers of being hypocrites by comparing their wrongdoing, and condemning the condemners. According to Cohen, other official forms of denials include different counteroffensive techniques such as accepting partial responsibility but denying using it as a policy or accepting blame and vowing to correct the situation.

Previous research utilized Cohan’s framework on accounts of denial in various manners. Some focused on the denial of atrocities and human rights violations by governments and perpetrators to maintain a positive self-image by minimizing their involvement in human rights crimes (Bryant et al., 2018). Others (Siddiqui et al., 2019) demonstrated how the use of denial accounts has contributed to a culture of denial in a society where human rights violations are ignored

A different set of studies utilized Cohen’s work to explain how private corporations respond to criminal scandals. These studies demonstrated how corporations often use denial to project a positive self-image to maintain their business. Corporations may use Implicatory denial to justify their actions by appealing to a higher loyalty (al Weswasi, 2019). Another way corporations utilize denial is by using interpretive denial to reframe criminal activities to gain public support, either by claiming responsible capitalism (Schoultz & Flyghed, 2016) or by using denial and other positive statements to highlight their social contribution (Whyte, 2016). These studies also underscored how the use of denial interacts with the values and norms of public discourse (Whyte, 2016).

While the studies above focused on formal accounts of denial, Cohen’s work is also used to explore accounts of denial from an individual perspective. Hanna Paul and Matthew Adams (2019) revealed how sustainability tourists use denial to account their choice to use unsustainable means of transportation (e.g., flying) by using Implicatory denial to justify for their choices and define themselves as sustainable tourists (Paul & Adams, 2019). Moreover, Efrat Shoham (2012) demonstrated how online talkback posts published in response to police brutality used accounts of denial to minimize the negative meaning of the violent acts. Shoham highlighted the denial of bystanders, another interest of Cohen, who were able to legitimize their support of police use of violence. Both studies demonstrated how official talk of denial is used to explain individual accounts of denial from a self-point-of-view and by bystanders.

This study focuses on accounts by activists who are both participants and bystanders. While Shoham demonstrated how talkback posts reacted to events by outsiders, in Ferguson, activists had to account for the violence both as bystanders and as participants in the protests. Although they were not involved directly in the violent acts, the activists had to account for it to counter their opponents, gain support and mobilize others. Therefore, denial had a dual purpose of reframing the protests as non-violent and exposing the underline causes of the protesters’ grievance – state-sanctioned violence against People of African Descent.

# Civil unrest: Understanding the use of violence in contentious events

Civil unrest has been a common practice to display various grievances throughout history. Since the mid-twentieth century, studies on contentious politics have explored various angles of civil unrest. Researchers explored the causes of civil unrest, identifying the flashpoint that triggered the unrest (Waddington, 2010). Different studies have also tried identifying various ideological motivations that catalyze civil unrest (Marx, 1970). Some focused on the causes contributing to the differences between unrests and their intensity and patterns (Abu-Lughod, 2007; Schneider, 2014). These types of studies focused on revealing the underlining causes of the unrest and the different ways to predict them while explaining variations between them.

Another range of scholarly works tried to provide a different outlook on civil unrest by focusing on its political meaning and function. These works focus on the political ethos of the unrest (Sokhi-Bulley, 2015, 2016). Some argued that civil unrest is an act that demands visibility from the state and its institutions by rejecting the norms of ‘respectable politics.’ Thus, it provides its participants, which are often excluded from the political sphere, tools to fight their marginalization (Kaulingfreks, 2008; Vinthagen, 2006). Others suggested that we should understand the antagonism that unrest reveals. Imogine Tyler (2013), for example, used the double meaning of the word revolt to explain how UK’s neo-liberalism led to the creation of the ‘revolting subjects’ who are perceived as a revolting underclass, which resulted in a lack of support for their own revolt in the form of political violence against their subjectification. Within this line of thinking, some suggested that the Ferguson unrest challenged the norms of protesting by African Americans, moving away from a romantic view of the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s toward a new form of struggles that rejected the ’right way’ to protest (Glaude, 2014; Smith, 2014). Moreover, these studies provided the background for other works, which focus on the unrest's participants.

Various studies on civil unrest focus on the different motivations that lead individuals to use violence as a means of protest. Juta Kawalerowicz and Michael Bigs (2015) focused on the socioeconomic background of the protesters as motivation for using violence and argue that the lack of social infrastructures creates alienation and frustration, leading to the use of violence. Yair Yassan (2021) argued that the choice to use violence during protests can be understood by protesters in several manners: as reactive to police violence, as a cost-beneficial act that raises awareness of social problems of marginalized groups, and as an act that questions the state’s legitimacy. Like Yassan, Mattias Wahlström (2011) also focused on protesters’ narratives of retrospective accounts of violent confrontations with the police. Wahlström demonstrated how narratives of provocation were used to redefine violent clashes.

However, unlike Yassan and Wahlström, this study focuses on the immediate response to the protests and the accounts of the events as they unfolded. Moreover, by focusing on immediate reactions to violence by non-violent participants in the Ferguson unrest, this paper aims to expose how activists utilized accounts of denial to navigate between the need to counter the labeling of the protests as violent, to mobilize support and to expose the source of their grievance, which is the violence enacted by the state daily.

# The Ferguson unrest: Context and background

On August 9, officer Darren Wilson stopped Michael Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson for Jaywalking. According to Wilson’s testimony before a Grand Jury, he suspected the two were involved in a theft from a nearby convenience store; however, it was not clear if Wilson was aware of this at that time (Department of Justice (DOJ) Report, 2015; State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson, 2014; Millitzer & Culley, 2014; Siddiqui & McCormack, 2015). According to Wilson’s testimony, an altercation developed between him and Brown resulting in Wilson shooting Brown, who was unarmed, and killing him. (Buchanan et al., 2015; DOJ, 2015). After the authorities did not remove Brown’s body for four hours, about 200 residents gathered around Brown’s body, enraged by the authorities’ behavior. In response, police forces, including SWAT teams, arrived at the scene. However, that evening concluded peacefully (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2015).

The next day, after the Ferguson police department refused to publish Wilson’s name, further frustration from locals grew, followed by protests in several locations across town. As tension grew, more police forces made their way into Ferguson and confronted protesters. That night 30 protesters were arrested, and violence erupted; a convenience store was set on fire, local businesses were looted, and several police cars were damaged. The police used riot gear, tear gas, dogs, and armed vehicles to disperse the protesters (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2015; Siddiqui & McCormack, 2015). For the next several days, protests vacillated between peaceful protests during the days and violent eruptions and standoffs with police forces during the nights (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2015). By August 16, Missouri governor Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency and called the local National Guard, who were gradually removed three days later (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2015). The major protests ended on August 25, the day of Brown's funeral, at his family's request (Siddiqui & McCormack, 2015).

During the 17-day protests, as a direct response to their conduct during the protests, protesters, locals, and journalists accused the police of misconduct, illegal arrests, use of excessive force, provoking violence, and violations of freedom of speech and the right to protest. Following these accusations, Ferguson police requested the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services at the DOJ an assessment report to review its conduct. The report sided with some of the accusations. Moreover, it also highlighted that Brown's death was merely a trigger that exposed years of tense police-community relations (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2015). Further investigation into the Ferguson police department, initiated by the DOJ, revealed systematic racial discrimination within the justice system of Ferguson and St. Louis County, which targeted its community of People of African Descent (Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, 2015). Following the report's conclusions, the DOJ filed a lawsuit against the Ferguson police department and demanded the implementation of extensive changes in its justice system.

The Ferguson unrest exposed a troubled history of racial relations in St. Louis County, which local activists helped to expose by utilizing social media. However, they also could not ignore the violence that occurred during the protests, which was used by those who opposed the demonstrations to attack the protesters (Freelon et al., 2016). During the protests, Twitter provided a space that activists turned to bring attention to what happened in Ferguson but also to account for the events as they unfolded. s.

# Data and method

Over the last two decades, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become an essential tool for activists, allowing them to mobilize, organize, gain visibility, and promote their messages locally and globally (Gerbaudo, 2012; LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2018; Neumayer & Rossi, 2018; Penney & Dadas, 2014; Rane & Salem, 2012). Social media affect how contentious events are perceived, both by those who participate in them and by others who watch from a distance (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Studies have shown that Twitter enabled ordinary citizens to reframe and create counter-narrative to other media outlets, while allowing marginalized voiced to be heard (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016; Moody-Ramirez et al., 2016). Therefore, Twitter has become a useful source to explore how activists response to state-sanction violence. During the Ferguson unrest, local activists used Twitter as a prominent tool, which allowed them to expose the source of their grievance and catch the attention of people in the US and around the world (Carr, 2014).

In order to examine how activists navigated between gaining support for their struggle while accounting for the violence that erupted during the protests, this research developed a thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of Twitter’s timeline of three crowdsource elite activists. Unlike previous studies, which utilized random sample data by using hashtags or words related to the Ferguson unrest (e.g., Blackstone et al., 2017; LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2018), this paper focuses on the full Twitter timeline of three activists who participated in the protests and used the social media platform to describe their accounts of the events. Using a detailed analysis of protesters’ timeline between August 9, 2014, the day of Michael Brown’s death, and August 25, 2014, the end of the major protests, allowed to expose more nuanced conversations about the unrest, which may be lost using sample data that utilized hashtags. Moreover, focusing on a full timeline and not on sample tweets also enable us to track the changing dynamics and strategies of ongoing events such as the police investigation into the death of Brown, mainstream media reports, and actions taken by local authorities.

The three activists, Antonio French, Johnetta Elzie, and DeRay Mckesson, whose Twitter feeds were analyzed, have been recognized by previous research and national media as crowdsource elites within the Ferguson Twitter network, gaining tens of thousands of followers during the days of the unrest (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2018; Mandaro, 2014; They Helped Make Twitter Matter in Ferguson Protests, 2015). Each protester’s Twitter timeline was chronologically archived and then coded. In total, 4201 tweets were coded, including tweets and retweets by the three activists.[[2]](#endnote-2)

The codes were then thematically sorted by different types of accounts. Out of these themes arose three major accounts of the violent acts during the protest: interpretive denial, implicatory denial, and positive representations of the protests, including highlighting peaceful demonstrations and supporting the local community and protesters (e.g., mobilizing clean-up and food drives). These responses allowed the activists to credibly respond to the framing of the unrest by the mainstream media as riots and their participants as troublemakers (Blackstone et al., 2017; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016), and mobilize support by exposing police misconduct during the protests and highlighting state-sanctioned violence that had led to the unrest. Therefore, accounting for violent acts had a crucial role in keeping the protests' momentum and avoiding distraction from the protesters' claims.

# Interpretive denial: ‘THIS IS NOT A RIOT!’

According to Cohen (2001), interpretive denial responds to accusations not by challenging the facts but by offering a different interpretation of the events or practices in question. French and Elzie initially addressed the various acts of violence and did not ignore them. French, for example, posted images of a broken ATM and the convenience store QuickTrip on fire (French, 2014a, 2014b). At the same time, Elzie mentioned vandalizing local businesses (Elzie, 2014a), therefore admitting the use of violence but not accounting for them. However, as the days went by, as all three took an active role in the demonstrations and in reporting them on Twitter, the use of interpretive denial became more apparent as all three used various framings to account for violent acts such as looting, arson, and property damage.

One form of Interpretive denial was done by simply rejecting the labeling of the protests as ‘riots’ in several manners. Elzie, for example, rejected the labeling by tweeting:

THIS IS NOT A RIOT! (Elzie, 2014b).

RT @FLOCKAfierce: Some people have a fundamental misunderstanding of what a RIOT is (Elzie, 2014c).

Another way of pushing off the riot labeling was by explaining what is ‘really going on’, for example:

no rioting in #Ferguson when we got down here. Just angry citizens telling the police to leave their neighborhood @kushdonmarley (Elzie, 2014i).

This tweet uses interpretive denial to clearly distinguish between grievance and the use of violence. Here the use of denial allows us to reframe the situation and highlight the source of the protest, the citizens’ anger.

Another way of avoiding the labeling of a riot was by minimizing the occurrence of violent acts and highlighting the protests.

I'd like people to stop calling this the #Ferguson riots. No rioting happened. Lots of protesting and pockets of looting (Mckesson, 2014k).

In this tweet, riot and looting are not perceived as the same, and looting is minimized to singular events in contrast to many demonstrations. While there is an admission of using violence, it is marked as an out-of-the-ordinary event.

The following tweet also gives a different meaning to what may seem like a violent act:

Protestors escape tear gas, break window at McDonald's. No looting. #Ferguson #MikeBrown (French, 2014h).

Here, French de-criminalized what may seem like a violent act and re-interpretive it as self-defense against police violence.

A different form of interpretive denial was used by separating protesters and those who used violence. Whether describing those who used violence as ‘not protesters’ (French, 2014f), as opportunists that are not aligned with protests’ goals (French, 2014g), or as people who exploit the situation for personal gain (Mckesson, 2014f). These tweets framed the violence and the protests as two different events and discerned between two types of participants: protesters and ‘fighters’ that in some cases also separated by location (French, 2014j). The use of denial in these tweets helped to delineate a clear border between violent acts and demonstrations.

In Ferguson, interpretive denial employed by activists provided a counter-narrative to mainstream media reports, which mostly focused on violent acts and not peaceful demonstrations. By acknowledging that violence did occur but distancing the protests from it, activists were able reframe the events as legitimized and to justify their own participation, but more importantly gain support in their calls for justice for Brown.

# Implicatory denial: ‘Only Ppl Rioting in STL are the Police’

The dominant type of denial within all three Twitter feeds was implicatory denial. As Cohen (2001) notes, this type of denial does not refute the deviant act or the knowledge about it but focuses on how it is used. During the protests, the three activists used implicatory denial in several manners: Appealing to higher loyalty, Contextualization and Advantageous comparisons.

**Appealing to higher loyalty:**

Denial by appealing to higher loyalty provided an instrumental point of view of labeling the protest as riots. In this case, the activists’ focus was refuting the idea of riots as a useless violent act with no positive outcomes:

I won't talk bad about the looters. Or rioters. That's what caused all the cameras & media to pay attention to the murder of #MikeBrown (Elzie, 2014l).

RT @zellieimani: Stop demonizing riots. Without riots you'd still be working 10-12 hours six days a week (Elzie, 2014g).

In these two tweets, there is no attempt to avoid the labeling of riots, instead, they are depicted as a useful act that may bring positive change, whether by getting attention to the source of the grievance - the killing of Brown, or by historically connecting them to a positive change of labor rights. Even here the activists did not endorse the violence as such but seem to treat it as a necessary evil.

**Contextualization**:

Contextualization was employed to highlight that the violent acts did not happen ‘out of nowhere’ but as a reaction to a history of troubled relations between Ferguson's residents and law enforcement that led to Brown’s death. Moreover, contextualization helped to negate the claims of useless or predatory violence. These types of claims came, for example, in President Obama’s statement in response to the events. Obama argued: ‘There is never an excuse for violence against police, or for those who would use this tragedy as a cover for vandalism or looting’ (Welker & McClam, 2014). While recognizing Brown’s death, Obama’s statement framed violence as predatory criminality without addressing its underline sources.

These following tweets demonstrate the use of contextualization to explain violence as a reaction to these causes:

#Ferguson is why we need Civilian Review Boards. Anger, frustration & potential violence comes when ppl lack faith that they'll get justice. (French, 2014c).

I don't condone looting, but I respect your anger. I respect your pain. And I respect how long you've waited to be seen. #Ferguson (Mckesson, 2014e).

These tweets explain the context of why some choose to employ violence while highlighting the source of the grievance. Here, denial is used to expose the problematic nature of police-community relations in Ferguson and the distrust between residents and the justice system that goes beyond Brown’s killing. The sources of these problematic relations were revealed months later in the DOJ investigation (Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, 2015).

Other tweets that provided contextualization referred to the source of the violent acts – the anger, the fear, and the frustration that led to the use of violence. In these tweets, activists highlighted that this type of outlet is understandable because there was no other choice:

The question is what outlet can we give these young men to let out their (justified) anger in a non-violent, constructive manner. Ideas? (French, 2014d).

Here, French implies that there was no way to avoid violence since there were no other serious political outlets. Furthermore, Elzie highlights that the anger is a result of a hopeless situation:

This anger is justified. What else is there to do?? Keep getting harassed? Keep getting killed?! (Elzie, 2014f).

In this tweet, implicatory denial is tapped into the source of the grievance and utilized to expose the dire situation of state-sanction violence, which People of African Descent face daily in Ferguson.

The three activists used contextualization to deny the source of the violence. By reframing and highlighting the underline causes that led to the use of violence, they were able to counterclaim those who framed the violence as a mindless or predatory act used for personal gain or as retaliation. Thus, they could acknowledge the use of violence and its reason while not fully supporting it.

**Advantageous comparisons**:

*Comparing moral compass:* Another way the activists used implicatory denial was by comparing the morality of killing Brown to the morality of violent acts such as looting or arson. For example, Elzie's tweets criticized those who condemn looting and arson but not Brown's killing:

QT CAN REBUILD! Nobody can bring this child back. Nobody. (Elzie, 2014d).

!!! RT @TheBlackVoice: This boy was slain in cold blood and they left his body out for four hours. And you’re upset at some looting? (Elzie, 2014e).

Mckesson reinforced this comparison by revealing the ontological perception behind Brown's death – the dehumanization of People of African Descent:

This is America finally acknowledging that black bodies are seen as weapons, as inherent threats, in America. #mikebrown #neverforget (Mckesson, 2014a).

This example exposes the ontological perception of the Black body as non-human, as a threat, and reinforces the moral comparison between Brown's death and property damage by exposing the hypocrisy of those who treat property the same way as human life. Moreover, comparing moral compass allowed, again, to expose the origin of the violence – the state and its agents.

*Condemn the condemner*: Many tweets that employed implicatory denial focused on police forces and their use of violence against protesters. In this following example, Elzie attached the labeling of riots to the police:

ONLY PPL RIOTING IN STL ARE THE POLICE. #STL #FERGUSON #FergusonMO (Elzie, 2014j).

Other tweets blamed the police for provoking violence by using rubber bullets or tear gas against protesters and violating constitutional rights (Elzie, 2014k; Mckesson, 2014b; French, 2014i). In some tweets, police were depicted as acting like they were in a war zone (Elzie, 2014m). Mckesson also highlighted state-sanction violence by attaching images of tear gas shells or describing illegal arrests with the words ‘This is America’ (Mckesson, 2014g, 2014j). Moreover, tweets regarding the police focused on the sheer numbers of police officers and the use of military equipment such as armored tracks (Mckesson, 2014h), thus, miniscule the violence used by some protesters and highlighting the militarized reaction of the police against civilians

Condemning the police allowed to shift the focus of the violence away from the protesters and exposed a greater problem of police militarization and the problematic use of different tactics against civilians. Here, denial was used for two purposes: to attach the narrative of violence to the police and shift it from the protesters and by doing that to expose state-sanction violence employed by the police – the source of the grievance of the protests.

# Shifting focus: Positive representations of the protests

While accounts of denial were a tool that helped activists to navigate between addressing the violence and mobilizing support, they were not the only ones that activists used. Along with the use of denial, the three activists also accounted for other contentious repertoires, which focused on positive representations of the protests, such as peaceful demonstrations, clean-ups, protecting local businesses, supporting other protesters by providing food and medical support and helping to de-escalate volatile situations. These tweets bolstered the use of denial by creating a counter-narrative to the labeling of the demonstrations as violent. Moreover, focusing on the positive aspects of the protests helped the activists legitimize their participation in the demonstrations by showing a range of contentious repertoires.

Other than underscoring the peaceful aspect of the protests, the activists also highlighted a strong sense of mutuality and solidarity among locals and protestors by using the ethos of the community. Elzie and Mckesson, for example, described unity among residents:

Don’t let anybody fool you into thinking that these aren’t peaceful protests. There’s an incredible sense of community here. #Ferguson (Mckesson, 2014d).

Tension is high. it's clear who EVERYONE is mad at. when I say EVERYONE I mean the entire community. Black/White/Asian/Latino #Ferguson (Elzie, 2014h).

In these two examples, the community provided a unifying source demonstrating vast support for the protests and their grievances, which helped to justify the demonstrations.

Finally, another element that helped to employ a positive outlook of the protests was by describing their atmosphere. In these tweets, the activists used positive emotions such as love and joy to describe the protests (Mckesson, 2014i). Mckesson for example, quoted a protester describing the protests like ‘a block party’ (Mckesson, 2014c) and in another tweet, French described a protest as beautiful (French, 2014e). These tweets helped to contrast the reports on violence and contributed to the interpretive denial that the activists used by reframing the protests as a positive event. By using emotions, the protests became beautiful, peaceful, and provoked positivity, while encounters with police were war-like, and evoked fear and tension. These contrasting atmospheres reinforce the use of denial to expose the ‘true nature’ of the protests and allowed to reframe the protests as non-violent as well as to mobilize support from outsiders.

# Conclusions

This paper aimed to explore how activists navigated between labeling the protests as violent and mobilizing support from the public during the Ferguson unrest in August 2014. By employing Stanly Cohen’s framework of official denial (2001), this paper demonstrated how three crowdsource elite’s activists utilized various forms of denial during the Ferguson protests to navigate between various dilemmas that arose from the use of violence during the protests. Activists had to address the violence while counter-labeling them as violent, avoiding pushing away supporters and evoking criticism from their opponents. Moreover, denial was utilized to expose racially motivated state-sanction violence against their community, thus justifying their grievances and gaining support nationally and globally.

Each form of denial was employed for different purposes. Interpretive denial was primarily used to create a counter-narrative to the mainstream media and other critics for focusing on the violence during the protests. This set of tweets rejected labeling the protests as ‘riots’ and used to separate between violent acts and protests. Furthermore, all three protesters also promoted positive representations of the demonstrations by highlighting their peaceful aspects. Combined with interpretive denial, the activists could gain support for their struggle and divert the narrative from predatory violence such as looting, which also relates to personal rather than collective gain.

Implicatory denial served to expose state-sanctioned violence used by police during the protests. Here, activists used various accounts of denial – contextualizing the violent reaction by some of the protesters, comparing the morality between Brown’s death and property damage but mainly highlighting the problematic and violent behavior of the police during the protests. Implicatory denial served as a response to accusations regarding useless and predatory violence. However, it later exposed the racially discriminatory nature of policing and the justice system in Ferguson and St. Louis County. Exposing state-sanctioned violence against the community of People of African Descent in Ferguson helped mobilize others and contributed to turning BLM from an online campaign into a mass movement in the US and across the world.

This study allowed us to gain a nuanced perspective into how activists are able to justify their actions and grievances while accounting for contentious acts. The study also demonstrated how activists utilized similar methods of official discourse of denial that are usually used by governments and corporations to deny their wrongdoing and using them to expose state oppression and violence against their community. Moreover, this paper adds to the existing literature on civil unrest by shifting away from questions on the usage of violence or its meaning by focusing on how activists are able to navigate around it while still achieving their goals. As this dynamic has been repeated in many cases, from protests that included monuments toppling to recent activism against climate change, this study offered a theoretical and methodological framework for analysis that can be applied in different struggles and contentious repertoires.

# References

Abu-Lughod, J. L. (2007). *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press.

al Weswasi, E. (2019). Spending blood for oil in Nigeria: a frame analysis of Shell’s neutralisation of acts that led to corporate-initiated state crime. *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Kriminalvidenskab*, *3*.

Blackstone, G. E., Cowart, H. S., & Saunders, L. M. (2017). TweetStorm in #ferguson: How News Organizations Framed Dominant Authority, Anti-Authority, and Political Figures in a Restive Community. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *61*(3), 597–614.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Bryant, E., Schimke, E. B., Brehm, H. N., & Uggen, C. (2018). Techniques of neutralization and identity work among accused genocide perpetrators. *Social Problems*, *65*(4), 584–602.

Buchanan, L., Fessenden, F., Lai, K. K. R., Park, H., Parlapiano, A., Tse, A., Wallace, T., Watkins, D., & Yourish, K. (2015, August 10). *What Happened in Ferguson?* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/ferguson-missouri-town-under-siege-after-police-shooting.html

Carr, D. (2014, August 17). *View of #Ferguson Thrust Michael Brown Shooting to National Attention*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/18/business/media/view-of-ferguson-thrust-michael-brown-shooting-to-national-attention.html?smid=tw-nytimes%26\_r=0

Cohen, S. (2001). *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*. Polity Press.

*Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into The Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson*. (2015). https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj\_report\_on\_shooting\_of\_michael\_brown\_1.pdf

Freelon, D., Mcilwain, C. D., & Clark, M. D. (2016). *Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the online struggle for offline justice*. Center for Media & Social Impact, American University

Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the Streets: social media and Contemporary Activism*. Pluto Press.

Glaude, E. S. Jr. (2014). A Requiem for Michael Brown/A Praisesong for Ferguson. *Theory & Event*, *17*(3). https://muse.jhu.edu/article/559370

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (Second). Basic Books.

Institute for Intergovernmental Research. (2015). *After-Action Assessment of the Police Response to the August 2014 Demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri*. https://cops.usdoj.gov/ric/Publications/cops-p317-pub.pdf

*Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department*. (2015). https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson\_police\_department\_report.pdf

Jackson, S. J., & Foucault Welles, B. (2016). #Ferguson is everywhere: initiators in emerging counterpublic networks. *Information Communication and Society*, *19*(3), 397–418.

Kaulingfreks, F. (2008). “Fuck Normalization”: Young urban ‘troublemakers’ as meaningful political actors. *Resistance Studies Magazine*, *3*, 35–51.

Kawalerowicz, J., & Biggs, M. (2015). Anarchy in the UK: Economic Deprivation, Social Disorganization, and Political Grievances in the London Riot of 2011. *Social Forces*, *94*(2), 673–698.

LeFebvre, R. K., & Armstrong, C. (2018). Grievance-based social movement mobilization in the #Ferguson Twitter storm. *New Media and Society*, *20*(1), 8–28.

Mandaro, L. (2014, August 25). *300 Ferguson tweets: A day’s work for Antonio French*. USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/08/25/antonio-french-twitter-ferguson/14457633/?utm\_content=buffer952c0&utm\_medium=social&utm\_source=twitter.com&utm\_campaign=buffer

Marx, G. T. (1970). Issueless Riots. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *391*, 21–33.

Millitzer, J., & Culley, V. (2014, August 15). *Chief Jackson: The convenience store robbery and Michael Brown shooting not connected*. FOX 2. <https://fox2now.com/news/live-updates-ferguson-police-chief-tom-jackson-speaks-at-a-press-conference/>

Moody-Ramirez, M., Fears, L., Randle, B., Smith, C., & Tait, G. (2016). Citizen Framing of #Ferguson on Twitter. *The Journal of social media in Society*, *5*(3), 37–69.

Neumayer, C., & Rossi, L. (2018). Images of protest in social media: Struggle over visibility and visual narratives: *New Media & Society*, *20*(11), 4293–4310.

Orbuch, T. L. (1997). PEOPLE’S ACCOUNTS COUNT: The Sociology of Accounts. *Annual. Review of Sociology*, *23*, 455–478.

Papacharissi, Z., & de Fatima Oliveira, M. (2012). Affective News and Networked Publics: The Rhythms of News Storytelling on #Egypt. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(2), 266–282.

Paul, H., & Adams, M. (2019). Positive self-representations, sustainability and socially organised denial in UK tourists: discursive barriers to a sustainable transport future. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *27*(2), 189–206.

Penney, J., & Dadas, C. (2014). (Re)Tweeting in the service of protest: Digital composition and circulation in the Occupy Wall Street movement. *New Media and Society*, *16*(1), 74–90.

Rane, H., & Salem, S. (2012). Social media, social movements and the diffusion of ideas in the Arab uprisings. *The Journal of International Communication*, *18*(1), 97–111.

Schneider, C. L. (2014). *Police power and race riots: Urban unrest in Paris and New York*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schoultz, I., & Flyghed, J. (2016). Doing business for a “higher loyalty”? How Swedish transnational corporations neutralise allegations of crime. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, *66*(2), 183–198.

Scott, M. B., & Lyman, S. M. (1968). Accounts. *American Sociological Review*, *33*(1), 46–62.

Shoham, E. (2012). Techniques of Denial towards Excessive Use of Force by the Police among Israeli Talkbacks. *Journal of Politics and Law*, *5*(4), 172–184.

Siddiqui, J., Mehjabeen, M., & Rahman, S. S. (2019). Accountability and labour governance in a ‘State of denial.’ In W. Pauline & I. Tsalavoutas (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Accounting in Emerging Economies* (pp. 221–232). Routledge.

Siddiqui, S., & McCormack, S. (2015, November 25). *Here’s A Timeline of The Events in Ferguson Since Michael Brown’s Death*. Huffington Post. <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ferguson-timeline_n_6220166>

Smith, M. (2014). Affect and Respectability Politics. *Theory & Event*, *17*(3). <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/559376>

Sokhi-Bulley, B. (2015). Performing Struggle: Parrhēsia in Ferguson. *Law and Critique*, *26*(1), 7–10.

Sokhi-Bulley, B. (2016). Re-reading the Riots: Counter-Conduct in London 2011. *Global Society*, *30*(2), 320–339.

*State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson*. (2014, September 16). https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/1370736/grand-jury-volume-5.pdf

Sykes, G. M., & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of Neutralization: A theory of delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, *22*(6), 664–670.

*They Helped Make Twitter Matter in Ferguson Protests*. (2015, August 10). New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/us/twitter-black-lives-matter-ferguson-protests.html

Tyler, I. (2013). Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain. In *Revolting Subjects*. Zed Books.

Vinthagen, S. (2006). *Political Undergrounds: Can Raging Riots and Everyday Theft become Politics of Normality?* *Projekt Underjorden, Musein: University of Gothenburg and Museum pages.*

Waddington, D. P. (2010). Applying the flashpoints model of public disorder to the 2001 bradford riot. *British Journal of Criminology*, *50*(2), 342–359.

Wahlström, M. (2011). Taking Control or Losing Control? Activist Narratives of Provocation and Collective Violence. *Social Movement Studies*, *10*(4), 367–385.

Welker, K. and McClam, E. (2014, August 14). *“No Excuse”: Obama Expresses Concern About Violence in Missouri*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/michael-%09brown-shooting/no-excuse-obama-expresses-concern-about-violence-missouri-n180666>

Whyte, D. (2016). It’s common sense, stupid! Corporate crime and techniques of neutralization in the automobile industry. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, *66*(2), 165–181.

Yassan, Y. (2021). Reactive, cost-beneficial or undermining legitimacy: How disempowered protestors explain their part in violent clashes with the state. *Social Movement Studies*, *20*(4), 478–494.

## Twitter

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014a, August 11). *They breaking windows out the black businesses up and down west Florissant. BLACK BUSINESSES. Why*. [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498654176113459202>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014b, August 11). *THIS IS NOT A RIOT!* [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/499019407117398016?s=20&t=mSHRCUXvpjwQleEEQd23Kw>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014c, August 11). RT @FLOCKAfierce: Some people have a fundamental misunderstanding of what a RIOT is. [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498879513300713472>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014d, August 11). *QT CAN REBUILD! Nobody can bring this child back. Nobody.* [Tweet] Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498828379978616835?s=20&t=7U-14bR-3f13yV2Z4lqIJg>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014e, August 11). *!!! RT @TheBlackVoice: This boy was slain in cold blood and they left his body out for four hours. And* [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498701832152047617>

Elzie, J. [Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014f, August 11). *This anger is justified. What else is there to do?? Keep getting harassed? Keep getting killed?!* [Tweet] Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498694053739761665>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014g, August 11). *RT @zellieimani: Stop demonizing riots. Without riots you'd still be working 10-12 hours six days a week*. [Tweet] Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498701798601785346?s=20&t=frzmmnle9lqFnrOpDMqz_w>

Elzie, J. [Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014h, August 12). *Tension is high. it's clear who EVERYONE is mad at. when I say EVERYONE I mean the entire community. Black/White/Asian/Latino.* [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/499032156816285696>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014i, August 12*). no rioting in #Ferguson when we got down here. just angry citizens telling the police to leave their neighborhood @kushdonmarley.* [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/498697322520248320>

Elzie, J. [Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014j, August 13). *ONLY PPL RIOTING IN STL ARE THE POLICE. #STL #FERGUSON #FergusonMO* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/499021452528463872>

Elzie, J. [Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014k, August 14). *Stop lying @CNN. Talk about the POLICE SHOOTING PELLETS, RUBBER BULLETS AND THROWING GAS CANS DIRECTLY AT PPL. #MikeBrown #stl.* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/499956703748571136?s=20&t=ADlIsCtRRfQLCDu1XAUoYg>

Elzie, J. [@Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014l, August 16). *I won't talk bad about the looters. Or rioters. That's what caused all the cameras & media to pay attention.* [Tweet] Twitter. <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/500701497709953024?s=20&t=I5CX8rOgrM-n_ewLpU-msg>

Elzie, J. [Nettaaaaaaaa]. (2014m, August 17). *The police act like they are straight LIVE IN IRAQ. This is America. And every vet I know is disgusted*. [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/Nettaaaaaaaa/status/501198299890585600>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014a August 10). *“@MichaelSkolnik: The QuickTrip is now burning. #Ferguson* (photo: @PDPJ)“ [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/498682432934412288?s=20&t=Y9HcDkYHnwcoQtJqPNERIA>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014b, August 10) *Right now in #Ferguson* <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/498676756711493632?s=20&t=shO6Sjy4ryKWbe7jcUzhuw>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014c, August 10). *#Ferguson is why we need Civilian Review Boards. Anger, frustration & potential violence comes when ppl lack faith that they'll.* [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/498466570675716096>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014d, August 10)*. The question is what outlet can we give these young men to let out their (justified) anger in a non-violent*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/498545352434548737>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014e, August 13*). A beautiful, peaceful, multi-generational protest going on right now. No police. Self-regulated. Beautiful. #proud.* [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/499381580419596288>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014f, August 17). *These people are not protestors. This is something different and it has little to do with #JusticeForMikeBrown*. [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/501238555566682112>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014g, August 17*). It’s important to differentiate the protestors from those violent opportunists that are not thinking about #MikeBrown or justice.* #Ferguson [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/500913258686337024>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014h, 18 August). *THIS---> “@kodacohen: Protestors escape tear gas,break window at McDonald's. No looting. #Ferguson #MikeBrown* “. [Tweet] Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/501236469860933632>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014i, August 19). *While I agree security's needed to maintain safety for protestors, residents & biz, we are seeing gross violations of Constitutional.* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/501518684444459008>

French, A. [@AntonioFrench]. (2014j, August 19) We were able to keep the peace at the front line, even after some very tense moments. But back.[Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/AntonioFrench/status/501591781000351744?s=20&t=HoG-a8eukVD3VtB7LeIqUA>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014a, August 15). *This is America finally acknowledging that black bodies are seen as weapons, as inherent threats, in America. #mikebrown #neverforget.* [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/deray/status/500515341408436225>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014b, August 15). *They are actively inciting a riot, provoking people in #Ferguson. Thankful that all eyes are on this town. #neverforget #mikebrown.* [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/deray/status/500513877604712449>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014c, August 16). *"I feel like I'm at a block party." -- That's the mood described by someone here. Very peaceful. #Ferguson*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/deray/status/500849021976838144>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014d, August 17*). Don't let anybody fool you into thinking that these aren't peaceful protests. There's an incredible sense of community here. #Ferguson*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/deray/status/500993079206490112?s=20&t=f9VapvZlf-yPpUnjFDh7TA>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014e, August 19). *I don't condone looting, but I respect your anger. I respect your pain. And I respect how long you've waited to* [Tweet]. Twitter from <https://twitter.com/deray/status/501777688512589824>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014f, August 19). *This community is grieving and is angry. Some exploit this anger. Some are not all. Anger is not aggression. #Ferguson* [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/deray/status/501929759618920448>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014g, August 19). *Man just arrested for peaceful protest. This is America. This is #Ferguson*. [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/deray/status/501883924667465728>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014h, August 20). *Unlike all other nights, tonight, all protestors are surrounded on all sides by at least 50-75 officers. #Ferguson*. [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/deray/status/501947424408346624?s=20&t=XT0Lc4f1dhGl6MT8G0LdhQ>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014i, August 20). There is just so much joy and love here. This is community. This is real. This is #Ferguson. [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/deray/status/503046653260365825?s=20&t=utVluluZmiTsuK7DVEKbag>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014j, August 21*). Tear Gas shells a guy picked up tonight. This is America. This is #ferguson*. http://ift.tt/1vb32zN [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/deray/status/501599137939595264>

Mckesson D. [@deray] (2014k, August 24). *I'd like people to stop calling this the #Ferguson riots. No rioting happened. Lots of protesting and pockets of looting*. [Tweet]. Twitter <https://twitter.com/deray/status/503579501725380609>

1. This initial wave of protests started a day after Brown's death and ended on August 25th, 2014. Another civil unrest was sparked in November after the grand jury decided not to indict the officer who shot Brown. However, this unrest was far shorter, and local authorities anticipated the protester’s reaction. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The analysis did not include video content that French and Mckesson uploaded via Vine (a total of 479 tweets). Vine users could post up to six-second videos and share them on Twitter and other social media platforms. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)