Fall 12-15-2017


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ABSTRACT

POLITICAL SCIENCE

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A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT: THE ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT TOWARDS PROTEST PARTICIPATION

Committee Chair: Kurt Young, Ph.D.

Thesis dated December 2017

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the degree to which protest participation is influenced by one or more social media usage factors: political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism), and political participation. Using a purposive sampling technique, 120 respondents were selected from among groups of protest participation organizations. A series of regression equations were tested along a theorized path leading to protest participation online and offline.

Results show political awareness significantly influenced political engagement, social media usage, and social media activism. Social media activism, in turn, served as the greatest predictor of protest participation. These findings suggest individuals engaged in social media activism coupled with political awareness, increase the likelihood of individuals mobilizing towards protest participation.
A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON THE PRESENT-DAY
SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT: THE ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL
INvolVEMENT TOWARDS PROTEST PARTICIPATION

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2017
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I give honor to the Gods of Africa who are the head of my life and the guides on my journey; without Them, nothing is possible. A sincere appreciation is given to my committee members, Dr. Kurt Young, Dr. Hashim Gibrill, and Dr. Gerry L. White for challenging and guiding me through this scholarly endeavor. Never have I experienced professors more dedicated to the development of students and the plight of African people. My wonderful mother and inspirational brother have been a major source of support during this recommitment towards my scholarly life. My two children, Tariq (The Morning Star) and Jada (Emerald Jewel), are my ancestors returned who help complete my existence and bring joy to my world. To all of my Brotherhoods, I give thanks for your light. My family of friends (Bino, G, Melek, Phil, Sekai, Onika, Sala, Lily) and others provided deep insight and a deep belief in me when my vision of achievement was blurred. Special thanks go to those who inspired my intellectual journey: Haire, Boone, Jones, Wilson, Dubois, Clarke, Diop, Rodney, Marley, Fela, X, Garvey, Fanon, White, Bass, Cohen, Hemmitt, and Davis among many others. My profound love and gratitude go to my family of Longs, Campbells, Wells, and Grants. Finally, thanks and Ashe go to our ancestors who have provided a blueprint for the work we need to accomplish for generations to come.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Black Lives Matter Movement** is a 21st century black social justice movement representing issues among African Americans primarily igniting in protest against state sanctioned police killings, yet tied to a legacy of black political and social issues.

**#BlackLivesMatter (#BLM)** is an online forum intended to build connections between black people and our allies to fight anti-black racism, to spark dialogue among Black people, and to facilitate the types of connections necessary to encourage social action and engagement.

**Black Twitter** refers to the unique community of black people on this social media platform expressing perspectives and dialogue; symbolic of the existence of forums and communities of blacks sharing, exchanging, collaborating and expressing opinions.

**Convergence** is defined as the process by which multiple industries and/or technologies integrate as co-dependent on a single technology.

**Digital Age** is a period widely emerging during the 1980s and 1990s through present-day characterized by the shift from a previous industry based on industrialization to a digital industry based on information. The Digital Age is also known as the Computer Age, Information Age, or New Media Age.

**Direct witnessing (DW)** relates to video recorded evidence, facts, and perceptions shared visually directly showing an incident occurrence.
Flat-world platform is the product of a convergence of the personal computer (which allowed every individual suddenly to become the author of his or her own content in digital form) with fiber-optic cable (which suddenly allowed all those individuals to access more and more digital content around the world for next to nothing) with the rise of work flow software (which enabled individuals all over the world to collaborate on that same digital content from anywhere, regardless of the distances between them).

Globalization 3.0: Globalization 1.0 was a period of imperialism and dynamic growth of countries. Globalization 2.0 was a period of imperialism and dynamic growth of corporations. Globalization 3.0 has emerged as a period of dynamic capabilities of individuals and groups who are capable to globalize digital content in an information economy.

Hashtag is a hyperlink address beginning with a pound sign attached to a word or phrase typically tied to a subject matter or topic associated. The platform Twitter with cross-functional linkages throughout social media networks.

Indirect witnessing (IW) relates to non-video evidence, facts, and/or perceptions shared after an incident occurs.

Internet is the term that acts as the global system of interconnected computer networks that allows for widespread communication and the rapid exchange of information.

Meme is a digital image that contains concisely written statements to relay a message.
**Offline** denotes physically engaging in political activities such as attending protests, demonstrations, campaign events, contacting a political actor, and U.S. postal mailing as opposed to online behavior.

**Online** refers to actively operating on the digital network known as the internet or World Wide Web while engaged in social media and other activities on the web.

**Political activism** is an interchangeable term also expressed as social media activism and/or online.

**Political engagement** is an interchangeable term of understanding known as traditional political participation and/or conventional political participation.

**Political involvement** includes factors, elements or characteristics of political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism), and political participation.

**Political participation** is an interchangeable term with informal political participation or unconventional political participation. Also serves as meaning within the context of contentious politics and protest participation.

**Smart Phone** is a handheld digital 21st century communication device containing the convergence of technologies over the multiple decades such as: the wireless phone, the Internet, camera, video, digital applications, text messaging, and various social media platforms just to name a few. The term smartphone can be interchangeable with mobile phone or mobile device due to present day consumer based standards.

**Social capitalism** is the surplus control of global information distribution by nation-states or privately-owned corporations controlling traditional media and, therefore, the major influencers of political socialization of mass populations. In a new information
economy towards adaptive integration of new technologies, social media provides individuals and groups the capability to globalize digital content that can countermand traditional narratives of socialization.

**Social Media** is an online digital network of dynamic communication where individuals and groups share, exchange, and collaborate by posting information, messages, photos, and videos. Example networks include, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, GooglePlus and YouTube.

**Traditional political participation** is an interchangeable term also shown as offline political participation.

**Viral** refers to the online social contagious response by the public to repost messaging (memes, photos, videos, comments) generating widespread views, posts, reposts, and commentary throughout social media.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Trayvon Martin was an unarmed 17-year-old African-American boy killed by a self-appointed neighborhood watch officer, George Zimmerman, on February 26, 2012. On July 12, 2013, Atlanta attorney/activist Mawuli Mel Davis and his family traveled to the Sanford, Florida courthouse to be a part of local support for the Martin family at the end of Zimmerman’s trial for jury deliberations. Attorney Davis uploaded and shared photos on Facebook and Instagram illustrating the sparse protest support at the courthouse. Using a mobile phone, he sent regular updates within a social media network of friends, family, professionals, and fellow activists.

During Atlanta’s Funk Jazz Café event (1990s rebirth of renown indoor music and arts festival), news of the acquittal of Trayvon’s killer arrived late Saturday night promptly following the two days of jury deliberation. The July 13, 2013 acquittal caused a chain reaction of individuals interacting with their smart phones accompanied with intense group expression. The collective mood during the music event shifted from a party climate to that of disbelief, anger, and outrage. It also brought about the need for more information. Coincidently, individuals and community activists in attendance

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gathered unexpectedly lamenting on how the acquittal was a miscarriage of justice needing to be redressed.

Two hashtags (a hyperlink address associated with the social network platform Twitter) were created immediately after the acquittal in an effort to connect shared thoughts while also providing information. The hashtags were #RespectBlackLives and #BlackLivesMatter. Both of these interactive hyperlinks would serve as bridges to mobilize individuals within the African-American community towards mass protest.²

The #RespectBlackLives was a part of a campaign to mobilize local demonstrations originated by the political activism of Davis|Bozeman Law Firm Community Services Division in Atlanta, GA. Within one week of the acquittal, the law firm collaborated with organizations to organize a rally at First Iconium Baptist Church, a town hall meeting with V103/1380 WSB, a march from Atlanta University Center to CNN, and a 100 city national vigil. This collaboration sought to organize, strategize and mobilize (O-S-M) individual citizens as a preemptive effort toward protest. Specifically, the Davis|Bozeman Law Firm Community Services Division, Sankofa Church of God (SCOG), Let Us Make Man (LUMM), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), National Action Network (NAN), Save OurSelves (SOS), V103FM, and 1380AM WSB were just several of the local organizations serving a common agenda. This agenda utilized social media to influence individual citizens to politically participate.

Throughout this period, an influx of racialized depictions of Martin inundated both traditional media and social media networks. Martin was being negatively portrayed as a criminal deserving of the consequences surrounding his death.

Consequently, traditional media offered a narrative counterbalancing the accounts expressed by the African-American community on social media. For example, traditional media showed photos of Martin in a hoodie while social media countered with humanizing photos of him smiling and/or with his family. In effect, social media would become the communication vehicle where individual and group expression sought to mobilize social consciousness in defense of Martin. In essence, Martin’s death and Zimmerman’s subsequent acquittal signified the experiences of the African-American community as a whole.

Approximately one year later, another unarmed African-American teen, Michael Brown, was killed by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Traditional media quickly broadcast an eyewitness account by Brown’s friend for public interpretation. In addition, social media was flooded with images of Brown’s teenaged body lying in the street which gained additional national attention to the incident. While the African-American community responded with online protest by posting and reposting comments, memes and videos, opposing narratives also flooded the various media outlets.


characterizing Brown as a criminal who deserved his fate. Conflicting narratives of facts and misinformation continued to flood social media. Nevertheless, social media erupted while mass protests were stirring in the streets of Ferguson.

The last three years have witnessed a resurgence of community and political engagement and dialogue within the African-American community. This rebirth of activism is spawned by the overwhelming occurrences of police involved killings of African Americans. What mainstream media previously interpreted as a series of isolated events was now conjoined to form a pattern of excessive force that now dominates national and international dialogue concerning racial relations in America. Not since the 1960s have so many segments of the African-American community been engaged in such a collective discussion. From Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, taking a knee on the field, to major entertainers like actor Jesse Williams providing a powerful acceptance speech at the 2016 Black Entertainment Television (BET), all have used their particular platform to keep the issue of police involved shootings in the forefront.

This attention is intensified through the emergence of social media. Social media has transformed the way news of these incidences is covered. This is evidenced in the matter television coverage during the 1960s transformed the Civil Rights Movement. For example, in 1965, on broadcast television America witnessed the tragic incident of police brutality against protestors on the Edmond Pettis Bridge. The incident, which became known as “Bloody Sunday” demonstrated government sanctioned violence upon individuals attempting to cross the bridge in route to Selma, Alabama’s voter registration
office. This effort was led by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) member, John Lewis, marked the strategic use of television toward a socio-political cause. America relied exclusively on major news outlets such as, radio, television and newsprint for coverage and interpretation. Imagine if 90 percent of those protestors possessed smartphones and used Facebook Live to capture and share their experience as it occurred in real time. One would wonder how much different the world’s reactions and responses would have been? How frequently would new images and video of the event surface in the weeks and months following? More specifically, what role does social media play in influencing individuals to mobilize towards protest during social justice movement?

Statement of the Problem

Research on the role social media plays on mass protest, social justice movements, and political involvement behavior is relatively recent when compared to the existing body of literature on social media usage as a whole and social justice movements and political involvement in general. This research defines the elements of political involvement as political awareness, political engagement, political activism (social media activism) and political participation (unconventional political participation also interchangeable with protest participation). The understanding of the role of social media and social movements relative to present-day social justice movements is not fully understood. Particularly, the role social media influences the Black Lives Matter Social

Justice Movement (BLMM) is not fully understood. Additionally, the degree to which these social media platforms increase the elements of political involvement also serves as justification for the present study.

In the element of political awareness, there is a problem in the mass distribution of misinformation putting into question the way the public can discern the veracity of information. Misinformation can lead to unclear messages of protest. According to Tucker, social media may be transforming the ways in which protests emerge and evolve.\(^6\) What is learned about the present social justice movement or the Black Lives Matter Movement may provide important lessons for understanding and anticipating political developments among African Americans. Therefore, to study the online political involvement of African Americans may fill gaps towards understanding the influences of an individual to participate in protest at this time. This research sought to address and comprehensively analyze the role of social media, the present-day social justice movement and elements of political involvement to deduce the significant characteristics influencing the individual citizen towards protest.

Likewise, political engagement may also recognize problems in the area of disinformation whereby political candidates or party affiliates flood social media with misleading information about the other candidate. This suggests that disinformation can flood group exchanges on social media. An evolving national Twitter feed, #BlackLivesMatter, developed into a highly recognizable hashtag which rose to national prominence as well as national controversy. From the hashtag grew a new national

political organization essentially becoming Black Lives Matter. The name Black Lives Matter has also become synonymous with the new social justice movement, distinctively different from the hashtag and the organization.\textsuperscript{7} As evidenced in wide scale social media usage, from July 12, 2013 thru March 31, 2016, 12 million hashtag uses were accumulated using the title #BlackLivesMatter.\textsuperscript{8} By analyzing African-American general usage of social media this research may show patterns that emerge to the forefront.

Within the element of social media activism, a lack of interface structure and strategy may harm an organizations ability to mobilize volunteers and supporters. This can also speak to understand the audience you are seeking to influence towards activism and participation. According to Anderson and Hitlin, two-thirds of black social media users “say that most or some of the posts they see on social media are about race.”\textsuperscript{9} In addition, the study shows 43 percent of social media users say that “most or some of the posts they see are about race.”\textsuperscript{10} As a disparity exists between black and white social media users, 68 percent of Black social media users say that most or some of the posts they see are about race versus 35 percent of white social media users.\textsuperscript{11} In effect, the issue of race expressed on social media platforms differs significantly, driving an


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
important distinction between group interests according to race and subject matter driving collective expression on social media.

Black Twitter, or the unique community of Blacks on this social media platform expressing Black perspectives is impacting American awareness and expression posting 995 million “tweets” about race from the period of January 1, 2015 thru March 31, 2016. This is important when considering how social media usage has had an influence globally, especially with subject matter significant to African Americans. African-American online engagement and expression is making unique contributions within the global communications network of various digital communities. This uniqueness may be important to analyze within a political context concerning factors associated with political involvement.

Recently, mass protests continued to occur throughout the United States on issues important to the African-American community. The combined issues of racial discrimination and police brutality have been catalysts to igniting social media discourse. However, how effective has social media been towards mobilizing individuals to mass protest? Organizations and individuals have used social media as a mechanism to organize, strategize and mobilize (O-S-M) to garner participation among individuals in the African-American community, yet to what end? Ultimately, this study seeks to address the gap in research by studying the degree to which social media influences individuals to mobilize towards protest.

12. Ibid.
This study shows that traditional political behavior in the media has consistently adapted to new tools and technologies relevant to the period. In the new age of social media, traditional political behavior continues to remain a constant while integrating new methods of conducting political tasks. Therefore, discussing the differences with an understanding of adaptive transformation becomes germane.

Traditional political behavior in the media versus social media networks of online political behavior offer new significance to understanding collective action among African Americans. The mechanisms of traditional media are showing definite signs of decreased usage. Social media networks are showing signs of increased usage. According to Schartz, internet usage can influence collective action revealing indicators of social movement mobilizing structures, opportunity structures, and framing processes.\(^\text{13}\) The internet and social media has offered a revival in the legacy of social movement among African Americans with new speed, range of communications and organizational capacity unlike previous generations. Conversely, traditional technologies of printing, postal services, the telephone, handbills, and word-of-mouth have all had a convergence into single technologies of either a personal computer device or the mobile phone. The Internet, the mobile phone and social media has had a definite role in shaping black narratives of incidences and the aftermath of protest.

Within America in more recent times, the role of social media and technology was highlighted during the nation’s coverage of some of the most publicized police killings of African Americans. These include the deaths witnessed after-the-fact of Trayvon Martin

\(^{13}\) Elizabeth Schwarz, *Political Mobilization Through Online Social Networks* (Riverside, CA: Sociology Department, University of California, 2011), 36.
in Sanford, Florida in 2012; Michael Brown in Ferguson, MI in 2014; Freddie Gray in Baltimore, MD in 2015; and Sandra Bland in Waller County, TX in 2015. Similarly, other examples of incidences directly witnessed on video, uploaded and shared on social media have been the cases of Eric Garner in New York, NY in 2014; Walter Scott in Charleston, SC in 2015; Philando Castille, Minneapolis, MN in 2016; Terrence Crutcher of Tulsa, OK in 2016; and Keith Lamont Scott in Charlotte, SC in 2016.

In each of these cases, social media activity has been a major indicator in the evolution of the present-day social justice movement otherwise known as the Black Lives Matter Movement. As this movement has evolved, documenting one of the social media platforms may show indicators towards the relationship between social media influencing individual political awareness, political engagement, political activism and political participation.

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to contribute to the limited body of knowledge on the role of social media influencing African-American protest participation, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the degree to which social media use influences individual levels of political involvement: political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism), and political participation all towards individual protest participation.

According to Vaccari and Cristian, social media and social networks were effectively used to increase political participation in the U.S. Presidential election of 2008 when the Barack Obama campaign employed the online network,
my.barackobama.com. This online tool recruited volunteers from across the country. The tool also solidified organizing mechanisms to enable participants to join the campaign movement. Consequently, participation was a form of electoral mobilization. Many volunteers became engaged in the political process through online participation via emails, websites, and interacting on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Through the use of social media, the Obama campaign organized 30,000 events and generated digital donors of 1.5 million people to contribute small donations ultimately totaling $700 million. This congealed social media as a major influence in the formal political process resulting in an unprecedented number of black “unlikely voters” participating in the campaign and election outcome.

Obtaining the support of a specific group of individual citizens to mobilize around political campaigns and social awareness initiatives serves as an indicator that social media may be an influencer driving individuals towards mass protest. In a U.S. Presidential campaign individual online behavior translated into tangible offline involvement. For example, individual citizen support of (1) online volunteerism translated into offline volunteerism, (2) joining the campaign online translated into

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17. Ibid.
offline campaign votes, and (3) online appeal for donations translated into tangible financial donation to the campaign. Therefore, since social media is being used as a formal tool of political organizing and mobilizing, this gives a significant rational for research. Thus, a study to analyze baseline characteristics to test the degree to which social media usage influences an individual’s level of political involvement is justified.

In another example, when focusing on information or factors such as political awareness, social media has been used to bring attention to issues that may be important to other political figures such as the First Lady of the United States. First Lady Michelle Obama participated in an online meme (digital image with theme based verbiage) holding a sign to mobilize political awareness about 200 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by a terrorist organization in Nigeria known as Boko Haram. Using Twitter, she would tweet in support of efforts to bring these girls back to their homes by using her own image while holding a sign with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. The hashtag went viral (an online or digital contagious reaction generating widespread views, posts, reposts, and commentary throughout social media) bringing awareness about the kidnapped girls, igniting political expression, and causing widespread global reaction. Again, instances such as these have been building added characteristics highlighting the various ways social media influences the elements of political involvement. However, the newness and constant evolution of social media conjoined with social movements and mass protest continues to signify the necessity of additional research.

18. Juliet Eilperin, “Here’s how the first president of the social media age has chosen to connect with Americans,” Washington Post, May 26, 2015, 9.

19. Ibid.
In summary, the growth of social media has been in existence over a short period of time when compared to the long legacy of social movements and mass protesting. This is evident in the evolution of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram utilized as major tools during President Barack Obama’s 2008 and 2012 elections. The strategic use of social media is just one example solidifying social media as a major political resource towards political participation and electoral mobilization. On the other hand, First Lady Michelle Obama’s social campaign used social media to gain awareness about 200 Nigerian girls who may not have otherwise gained widespread sentiment. Therefore, social media may also offer influencers in factors of political involvement, especially with political engagement and awareness.

Likewise, social media has revealed connections linking incidences of police killing and the factors of political involvement toward protest participation. A pattern of mass protests ignited by police killings from the periods of Trayvon Martin (2013) and Michael Brown (2014) to the more recent police killings as in Keith L. Scott (2016) has led to mass protest and movement. Taking these factors into consideration, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the degree to which social media use influences elements of political involvement towards individual protest participation.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

To what degree does social media use influence the elements of political involvement towards individual protest participation?
Sub-Research Questions

RQ1: To what degree does the level of political awareness influence social media?

RQ2: To what degree does political awareness influence political engagement among protest participants?

RQ3: To what degree does political awareness influence social media activism among protest participants?

RQ4: To what degree does social media usage influence political engagement among protest participants?

RQ5: To what degree does social media usage influence political activism engagement among protest participants?

RQ6: To what degree does social media usage influence protest participation among participants?

RQ7: To what degree does social media activism influence protest participation among protest participants?

RQ8: To what degree does political engagement influence protest participation among protest participants?

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are as follows:

Ho1: There is no statistical significant relationship between level of political awareness and social media among protest participants.
Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between political awareness and political engagement among protest participants.

Ho3: There is no statistical significant relationship between political awareness and social media activism among protest participants?

Ho4: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and political engagement among protest participants?

Ho5: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and political activism engagement among protest participants?

Ho6: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and protest participation among participants?

Ho7: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media activism and protest participation among protest participants?

Ho8: There is no statistical significant relationship between political engagement and protest participation among protest participants?

Assumptions

The assumptions in this research have underlying considerations about social media and political involvement in the Digital Age. Social media is a focal point for understanding the behaviors of the modern citizen during a period of mass protest movements in America. Specifically, for the purposes of this study, these modern citizens are African Americans possessing unique characteristics as a community of individuals whose online behavior may link to offline protest participation. This means
their political online behavior may be a major signifier towards offline participation as individual protestors.

This study assumes the terminology of political involvement are factors or elements of political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism), and political participation. Therefore, this study uses terminology such as political engagement that can be defined as traditional political participation and/or conventional political participation. In addition, traditional political participation is interchangeable with the terminology of offline political participation. In the case of political activism, this term is interchangeable with social media activism and/or online. To add, the term political participation uses terminology that is interchangeable with informal political participation or unconventional political participation.

With the emergence and rapid evolution of social media it can be assumed that a new pedagogy or social learning system has transformed the information base of traditional media. Traditional media has served as a pedagogical or social learning institution that has influenced political socialization through mass communication. This communication vehicle has thereby been a learning tool in American culture influencing the elements of social engineering and political engagement. According to Vaccari and Valeriani, “Mass media is a one-way channel of communication, social media allows

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21. Ibid.
individuals to both publish and read political messages in a networked environment.”

This implies that traditional media possessed considerable influence in the practice of one-way distribution of information.

Conventionally, agencies influencing political socialization were establishments of government, education, mass media and other similar institutions. These conveyors of mass communication distributed information to large-scale audiences containing messages, narratives and perspectives. With the advent of social media, these traditional institutions are being forcibly transformed. The former relationship between media and the public was a vertical hierarchy of a downward distribution of information to the masses. The hegemony of vertical hierarchy served as the main method of decision-making between traditional media and the public. Hence, a communication apparatus monopolizing information distribution is exampled through the news, political programming, and protest coverage.

The arrival of social media has created a new flattened or horizontal arrangement whereby individuals directly redistribute information based on networks of two-way or dynamic methods of communication. Social media has revolutionized the way the public consumes information and the manner information is distributed. “The social media revolution” as discussed by Ruth Harper, has changed the entire industry of

22. Vaccari et al., “Political Expression and Action on Social Media,” 221-239.


journalism and media. Additionally, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are reportedly more significant and popular than ever before. Platforms such as these have empowered individuals to create applications and content to distribute globally for public use and consumption. Traditional media no longer serves as the singular monopolizing agency of information distribution.

As political science has formally critiqued hegemonic structures exampled by economic imperialism, it may be just as significant to suggest that social capital or information capital has had a similar relational impact on society. Economic imperialism has been an exploitative force undermining African-American life and conditions. America’s deeply rooted belief in the social construct of racism using capitalism as a tool of exploitation has institutionalized a white power structure that exercises considerable power to the chagrin of African-American society.

Racism and capitalism employed laws, social policy, and institutional practices consistently reducing African Americans to second-class citizens, subsequently producing structures of race-based hierarchies.

As a result, African Americans have responded with a legacy of non-traditional politics to countermand the negative narratives delimitated by traditional mass media


26. Ibid.


29. Ibid.
systems with their own competing social capital. However, the inequality in the
distribution of social capital has garnered false accounts to thrive as historical truth until
social media created new collaborative communities for the collective of like-minded
groups.

Historically, African-American participation in the political process has been
fraught with strife from the larger society. Essentially, African-American political
participation found it necessary to protest to gain human rights and civil rights. African
Americans have had to strategically manipulate media technologies appropriate to the
period. For example, the Civil Rights Movement leadership strategically manipulated
television networks to gain wide scale coverage to shed light on the socio-political
conditions among African Americans. The coverage would serve as a witnessing tool to
prove injustices expressed by this group of citizens. The availability of technology in the
form of television opened the door for wide scale audiences internationally to witness
what was playing out in America firsthand.

African-American efforts towards economic equality may show parallel efforts
towards gaining equality in the dissemination of social capital or information capital.
With that said, social media may be an equalizing tool in the dissemination of
information and social capital in the 21st century.

Significance of the Study

Today’s social justice movement, also known as the Black Lives Matter
Movement, is a major occurrence in America at this time. In the midst of a maturing
digital and information age, the confluences of political science, social media, mass
protest, social movement and the elements of political involvement all function as unique factors impacting African-American political experience. This study sought to contribute to the extensive legacy of black political scientists adding relevant and timely research. This includes subjects impacting the global African body. Thus, evolving and emerging technologies have contributed as consistent influences in all societies past and present. By taking inventory of technological resources, deeper insight may be obtained into how technology has also been an instrument of power.

Therefore, the significance of the study seeks to contribute to filling the gaps in research by providing a scope and sequence of historical content analysis, contextual analysis, and quantitative inquiry. Effectively, this means drawing insight that may integrate a comprehensive understanding of the influences causing individuals to participate in the present-day mass protests as incidents of police killings continue to emerge.

In the study of black political science, Hanes Walton asserted the importance of scholars and research focusing on how black politics should function. In his book

*Invisible Politics: Black Political Behavior*, Walton stated the following:

> The scholars engaged in the study of Black Politics must be concerned with the action, not just with developing concepts and theories and methods. They must be indeed, often are--both theoreticians and practitioners. We must conduct our descriptive and empirical analysis of political activity with an eye to prescribing how Black Politics ought to function and how it ought to bring about political change for a population that remains burdened by domination and exploitation. We have no choice. Either we accept this obligation or we fail not only to make explicit our thinking, but also to have any effect on the everyday lives of Black people.\(^{30}\)

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Walton’s proposal is significant when considering the role of social media in the context of race, mass protest and police brutality. Certainly, his testament also implies the significance of the black political scientist’s role to function as a purveyor of empirical evidence to determine phenomenological experience and transformative politics. Therefore, the unique experience of individual African Americans using technology and social media in the American political and social landscape, offers significance for research in a new digital infrastructure.

Claude Ake in one of his telling works, *Social Science as Imperialism*, addressed the limits of western social science as a mechanism to study African countries or in effect, black political experiences in the context of western imperialism:

The core political problem is that the ruling class will be unequivocally opposed to the development of a social science which is uncompromisingly anti-imperialist and which is dedicated uncompromisingly to a mass-oriented idea of development. Such a social science will be regarded quite rightly, perhaps, from the point of view of the ruling class as a dangerous form of radicalism. To gauge the possible vehemence of this opposition to the social sciences it should be noted that with few exceptions, the indications are that Third World governments are highly suspicious of social science, any social science that is including even the type that buttresses the legitimacy of the social and economic systems over which they rule.

Since political science falls within one of the subfields of the social sciences, Ake suggested there are implications and problems associated with conducting research on matters concerning African people and politics inside of western influenced societies. Moreover, when combining black political science with current new age technologies,

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32. Ibid.
some western literature will support notions of only legitimizing conventional politics versus the challenges of inequality in unconventional or contentious politics. Therefore, it falls on the research to weigh adverse notions of the realities of black politics inside western influenced America. With that said, analyzing social media aligned with black movements and mass protests, due to the limits of research from the position of the black political experience, is significant of study.\textsuperscript{33}

This research is being conducted to include a legacy of African Americans who have been forced to engage in “so called” unconventional methods of politics involvement in the midst of American democracy. Thus, the essential inquiries seek to understand the unique degree to which social media is having influence on black protests tied to incidences of police killings in the landscape of American politics.

Ricky Hill’s political view provided some contextual understanding here as he stated the following:

The core of Black politics is power. Power relations define the group and class character of black politics, and they are a manifestation of the universal struggle for power. Power here is conceived as the capacity of social class or group to realize its objective interest and human volition. Thus, Black politics is a structural matter – institutional and organizational. Black Politics is manifested in four processes: (1) a power struggle within the black community over the optimum strategy for liberation, (2) a struggle within the white community over the optimum strategy for maintaining domination; (3) the conflict, complicity, and collaboration between and among black and white factions, and (4) a struggle for black political authority and participation in making and impacting public policy.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} Ake, \textit{Social Science as Imperialism}, 124-179.

Hill’s assertions were based on four processes of black politics reinterpreted with questions directly significant to social media and factors of political involvement. Analyzing social media and the factors of political involvement can be significant in understanding: (1) How is social media used as a strategy for liberation within the black community? (2) How does white power structure of traditional media maintain domination in a new social media network? (3) What are the conflict, complicity, and collaboration between and among black and white factions on the issues of race and police killings? (4) How does the use of social media struggle for black political authority and participation in making and impacting public policy?\textsuperscript{35}

Therefore, to reiterate, this study seeks to contribute to the long legacy of black political scientists adding relevant and timely research on subjects impacting political engagement among the global African body politic. The confluences of black political science, social media, and the present-day social justice movement serves as significance towards understanding African Americans regarded as individual digital citizens.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature provides a critical evaluation of previous research on social media, mass protest movements and the elements of political involvement. Specifically, it organizes, integrates and evaluates previously published material on social media, mass protest movements, and the elements of political involvement including political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism) and political participation. Moreover, the literature integrates tenants of protesting that includes organizing, strategizing, and mobilizing. The review covers the (1) historical analysis of political involvement, (2) contextualizing social media and technology convergence, (3) social media and elements of political involvement, and (4) a review of the theoretical underpinnings for the study.

Historical Analysis of the Factors of Political Involvement

Factors of political involvement exist within major historical epochs among African Americans since America’s inception, particularly from the 18th century to the present date. The overall social conditions throughout these periods have shown major political conditions in which the black political experience has had significant responses using technology as a tool for political and social rights. These communication platforms are evident within these epochs during the agricultural age (19th century), the industrial age (20th century), and the digital age (21st century). Each of these periods produced
socio-political conditions that respectively blended the eras of slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power Movement.

The period of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries was formerly driven by an agricultural system of slavery between 1619 and 1865. The industrial age emerged during of the 19th century going from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. The industrial age saw the decline of slavery, the emergence of The Reconstruction Era (1865–1877) and the Jim Crow Era (1877–1955). The Civil Rights Movement (1940–1965), and the Black Power Movement (1965–1975) saw the ending the industrial age and ushered in the digital age in the last decades of the 20th century. Overall, these periods brought about major transformations influencing the overall American political landscape. Therefore, the periods of American Slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and the Black Power Eras all serve as significant stages to analyze the influences of technologies as precursors to social media towards protest participation.

**Slavery (1619–1865): Precursors to Social Media**

According to census data documented in the *African American Desk Reference*, population totals among blacks in 1800 totaled 893,362 enslaved and 108,435 free compared to the 1860 census totaling 3,953,760 enslaved and 488,070 free.¹ Since the black community consisted of a population that was mostly enslaved in the South while others were free in the North, unique communication networks served as technological precursors to social media throughout the epoch of slavery during the Agricultural Age.

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Due to the apparent social conditions, various forms of communication platforms were based on rhythmic coded systems principally for protest and rebellion purposes. Two examples of the rhythmic coded systems or communication platforms were the African drum ("talking" drum) and the Negro spirituals (songs).

Logically, by enslaving Africans many of the cultural technologies and tools embedded in the African historical memory survived the middle passage of the Atlantic Ocean, navigating human cargo to the Caribbean Islands and North America. Since the enslaved African had neither rights nor the enfranchisement to participate in the American political system, the drum served as an instrument of communication transmitting information from across communities and plantations through the southern states. This was related to the original networks of communities and civilizations communicating across the African continent for thousands of years. The drum, as an instrument of communication using a rhythmic coded system, served as a tool in the political arena surreptitiously to organize and mobilize revolts and rebellions to regain independence and sovereignty while fighting against slavery.

Upon discovering the significance of rhythmic coded system, disguised in the elusive cadence of the drum, white enslavers later recognized that the drum, also known as the "talking drum," was a unique instrument of transmitting information that mobilized communication between enslavement communities.2 In response, new state codes or laws were created to prevent and outlaw this ancient form of communication among

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Africans. White political reaction describes the tool utilized as an opposing mechanism towards rebellion and mobilization. One example shown in the South Carolina Slave Code states: “It is absolutely necessary to the safety of this Province, that all due care be taken to restrain Negroes from using or keeping of drums, which may call together or give sign or notice to one another of their wicked designs and purposes.” As a result of this slave code or law, the use of the drum significantly decreased and no longer served as a mechanism of communication among blacks. As the verbiage of this slave code implies described in the statement, “wicked designs and purposes,” the enslaved African populations were using the drum to organize, strategize, and mobilize against the social conditions of slavery. Thus, these enslaved Africans were vying for freedom and liberation with an early technological instrument of communication.

Other political messaging was used in communication networks towards protest as well. The use of Negro spirituals enabled blacks to escape slavery, as a form of protest mobilization, to the free states and/or territories. By forming shared communication networks among enslaved and free blacks, other technological tactics were employed to mobilize strategic operations towards physical liberation and freedom. Harriet Tubman, one of the most notable activists of the 19th century against slavery, used strategy to organize and mobilize an underground network to free enslaved Africans. This network traveled from southern plantations to northern free states, and eventually Canada, upon the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850.

Similar to the coded rhythmic system of drumming, coded rhythmic systems used hidden metaphors within spiritual songs to transmit important and clandestine information regarding the strategies of mobilization toward blacks reaching physical freedom of the North. In effect, according to Lovell, political activists such as Tubman used songs to impart travel strategy, convey general conditions, and conduct safety procedures. One song she was said to use was “Go Down Moses.” The words of the song state:

When Israel was in Egypt's land:
Let my people go,
Oppress'd so hard they could not stand,
Let my People go.

Refrain:
Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt's land,
Tell old Pharaoh,
Let my people go.  

Metaphorically, the coded language in the song symbolized meaning within the words. Israel represents the enslaved peoples. Egypt represents the slave state. Pharaoh reflected the master slaver or slaver. Lastly, Moses, Harriett Tubman, represents the freedom fighter freeing the enslaved. The words in “The Underground Railroad” represented a way to organize messaging to mobilize efforts towards freeing enslaved Africans. The song itself represented a coded language for group communication that was politically and socially driven to liberation and freedom.


In effect, African people have been using technology to communicate critical messaging since the birth of the American political system. The 19th century’s American agricultural economy employed a system of slavery creating harsh conditions among the enslaved African. The enslaved African used cultural technologies embedded in a rhythmic coded system to organize and mobilize towards protest participation and freedom. Both the African drum and the Negro spirituals served as political tools or technologies using a rhythmic coded cadence or words to relay messages from one community or group to another. These methods conveyed a likeness to a social network of communication.

**Reconstruction (1865–1877)**

After the epoch-making period of Slavery, the brief period of Reconstruction ushered in new tools and methods of political engagement among blacks. During this period, blacks participated in the voting process, ran and won political offices, and engaged in the proliferation of institution building throughout the United States and the expanded territories. Essentially, new technologies would emerge along with new institutions acting as conveyors of social communication between communities.

W.E.B. Du Bois’ work, *Black Reconstruction in America,* documents the newly enfranchised electorate of black voters after the Civil War in 1867. He reported there were 703,459 black (colored) registered voters and 660,181 white registered voters. This grand total of both black and white numbered 1,363,640 million based on all the

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registered voters in the ten southern states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. According to Dubois, the data showed black voters outnumbered white voters throughout the ten southern states. Specifically, the data showed black voters outnumbering white voters directly in the five southern states of South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Dubois pointed out that while the significant increase with the newly enfranchised black registered voters to shape, an increase among previously disenfranchised poor white voters was also taking shape.

According to Clarke, the African-American community developed black institutions such as colleges/universities, churches, and newspapers. Consequently, individual professions were started within these institutions giving rise to the black educator, the black preacher, and the black journalist respectively. Each of these professions became significant political actors by conveying critical and strategic messaging throughout the African-American community. Essentially, the black educator using the classroom, the preacher using the pulpit, and the journalist publishing printed newspapers, all served as mechanisms of communication platforms and social learning.

According to Daniel, overview of data at the end of the Reconstruction Era may shed light on the political gains of enfranchisement for African Americans. At the formal end of the Reconstruction period, the Compromise of 1877 marked the withdrawal of federal troops from southern states causing the loss of military protection and

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enforcement of the legal rights of African Americans.⁸ At the end of the Reconstruction Era, 80 percent of the black population was illiterate or unable to read with a total black population of 4,880,009.⁹

According to Ronald Walters, W.E.B. Du Bois, a contemporary of the period, documented an estimated 1,000,000 black voters by the year 1892. By the turn of the century in 1900, that percentage was nearly cut in half with a decrease in illiteracy percentage totaling 45 percent of the black population (8,883,994) unable to read.¹⁰ By 1904, black registered voters totaling 400,000 significantly decreased by 60 percent. In certain southern states, during the same period, the same trend of decreasing numbers of registered black voters was occurring.¹¹

Walters continued to elucidate that in Mississippi, 147,000 registered black voters significantly decreased to 8,615 black voters.¹² In Louisiana, an estimated 127,000 registered black voters significantly decreased to 7,000 black voters.¹³ In Alabama, 130,000 registered black voters decreased to 5,000 black voters.¹⁴ Upon further analysis,

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⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Ibid.
this trend among black voters was indicative to the gains made during reconstruction and the new policies that sought to diminish black political power in an effort to make black political involvement obsolete.\textsuperscript{15}

Nevertheless, certain technologies would emerge during this period such as the telegraph and subsequently the telephone, both serving as early electronic technologies of communication platforms. Ironically, Granville T. Woods, a black inventor, would combine these very different inventions to into what would become the modern telephone by inventing the induction telegraph.\textsuperscript{16} Although these are significant precursors to social media and communication technologies, black political engagement was demonstrated in the rising numbers of black institutions and the increase in black registered voters which all served as important factors towards political engagement during the Jim Crow Era.

**Jim Crow Era (1877–1955): Technology Precursor to Social Media**

The Jim Crow Era represents a protracted period of racial terrorism, lawful enactments of second-class citizenry, and factious politics among blacks in the United States. According to W.E.B. DuBois, combined with the Compromise of 1877, the United States Supreme Court Decision of Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 served as the legal basis for discrimination against African Americans in the social arrangements between black and white citizens.\textsuperscript{17} This federal enactment constitutionalized the legality of the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.


“separate but equal” doctrine, strengthening the Jim Crow Era of disenfranchisement as industries of communication sought to respond.  

18 The black newspaper, as one major example, produced black journalism countermanding the wide distribution of false propaganda. The perpetual reinforcement of negative stereotypes by white newspapers and journalism caused the narratives and storylines about Africans as untrue on an international scale.

Contextually, the transition from the hand processed printing press to the steam-processed printing press, the industrial printing press significantly evolved during the 19th century as a major tool to reproduce written information to mass audiences.  

19 Henry Gates wrote an article in The Root entitled “What was the 1st Black American Newspaper” and outlined some important facts about the first newspapers. To paraphrase, he wrote the first black newspaper was Freedoms Journal that was founded in 1827. In 1830, there were only 319,599 free blacks in the United States and, therefore, the targeted population for print news. Freedoms Journal, started by free black men, Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm, sought to counterbalance the racist perspectives of white newspapers’ negative portrayal of blacks. The newspaper, and the political activism of its founders, transmitted information locally and globally and developed a black network of communication and distribution spanning from New York to other


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.
urban cities throughout the North. Moreover, the publication reached black readers as far as Canada and the Caribbean. Engaging these various black communities with new and relevant political thought challenged the authority of white power arrangements and other agencies vilifying and criminalizing black political behavior. Most notably, black journalism used the medium of newsprint to politically protest, to inform, share, and provide critical perspective during the Jim Crow Era.

In his biography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: From 1817-1882*, Fredrick Douglass considered to be a major black leader of the 19th century, started the newspaper *The Northern Star* in 1847, essentially focused on the same mission as Cornish and Russwurm. As an example, another journalist and activist, Ida. B. Wells, became a news print documentarian on the abuses of the criminal justice system and the socially accepted practices of lynching. Her work marked the close of the 19th century and the birth of the 20th century.

Wells utilized the newspaper as a political mechanism to focus mass attention on the atrocities of lynching and sought to create anti-lynching laws. In 1896, her pamphlet, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, characterized the implications of domestic terrorism that were taking place in communities across the country to the

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.


detriment of the black community. She provided trending statistics on the lynching and the inaction of the criminal justice system about these incidences. During this period, she provided a table published by the *Chicago Tribune* describing the number of blacks lynched in 1892.

Based on numbers gathered from various states across America in 1892, 241 persons were lynched: 22 in Alabama, 25 in Arkansas, 3 in California, 11 in Florida, 17 in Georgia, 8 in Idaho, 1 in Illinois, 3 in Kansas, 9 in Kentucky, 29 in Louisiana, 1 in Maryland, 16 in Mississippi, 6 in Missouri, 4 in Montana, 1 in New York, 5 in North Carolina, 1 in North Dakota, 3 in Ohio, 5 in South Carolina, 28 in Tennessee, 15 in Texas, 5 in West Virginia, 9 in Wyoming, 3 in Arizona Territory, and 3 in Oklahoma. In her own words, she stated:

> The men who make these charges encourage or lead the mobs which do the lynching. They belong to the race which holds Negro life cheap, which owns the telegraph wires, newspapers, and all other communication with the outside world. They write the reports which justify lynching by painting the Negro as black as possible, and those reports are accepted by the press associations and the world without question or investigation. The mob spirit had increased with alarming frequency and violence. Over a thousand black men, women and children have been thus sacrificed the past ten years. The sheriffs, police, and state officials stand by and see the work done well. The coroner's jury is often formed among those who took part in the lynching and a verdict, "Death at the hands of parties unknown to the jury" is rendered. As the number of lynchings have increased, so has the cruelty and barbarism of the lynchers. Three human beings were burned alive in civilized America during the first six months of this year (1893). Over one hundred have been lynched in this half year. They were hanged, then cut, shot and burned.25

Wells provided essential data on the number of blacks killed by white lynching mobs creating an environment of onerous politics between blacks and

25. Ibid.
whites. Moreover, Wells implied that white communication corporations were influencing the media. White ownership and distribution capabilities through telegraph wires and more newspapers companies were significant compared to black ownership.

Wells is also known as one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Handbills, like modern day memes, were frequently used as a mechanism of informing and marketing to the masses as a means for political engagement.

**Civil Rights Movement (1940–1965): Technology Precursor to Social Media**

At the time of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), television had a significant impact on the elements of political involvement. This can be exampled during major events influencing the U.S. Presidency and the CRM vying for strategic airtime to effect political awareness. During the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the election of Robert F. Kennedy, both were strategic towards the influences of national attention. Specifically, Roosevelt’s reaction to the CRM mobilization for a march on Washington and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy’s use of television for electoral mobilization purposes served as possible indicators for the future of CRM strategic use of television. Consequently, there are critical CRM events that effectively used television and media as mechanisms of communication and political engagement strategy: (1) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech during the March on Washington in 1963, (2) Fannie Lou Hamer’s speech during the Democratic National Convention in
Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1964, and (3) the march across the Edmond Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama in 1965.

According to Bracey and Meier, the first planned March on Washington, in 1941, was conceived and supported by early Civil Rights Movement leader A. Phillip Randolph. Due to the threat of the march and the images the event would project globally in the middle of World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt felt compelled to capitulate to Civil Rights leadership and sign executive order 8802. This executive order officially eliminated the discrimination of race, color, creed, or national origins in all departments of the government and all national defense programs.

During the 1950s and 1960s, in the midst of the CRM, television became a largely used technology tool of political awareness in the American political landscape. According to James Druckman in research published in the *Journal of Politics*, “The Power of television images. The first Kennedy Nixon Debate revisited,” the 1960 Presidential election between Democrat Senator John F. Kennedy and Republican Vice President Richard Nixon televised the live debates for the first time in American politics. Americans listening to the Presidential debate on radio determined Nixon won the debate, on the other hand, Americans who saw the debate on television determined Kennedy won. It has been argued that one of the major factors to Kennedy winning the United


States Presidency was due to his favorable appeal on television during the debates and his overall use of television during the election. As a result, the television, a major precursor to social media, was utilized as a new affordable technology for mass consumption transmitting political information and awareness to the public.

According to William Jones in his text *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights*, on August 28, 1963 an estimated 250,000 demonstrators marched on Washington in protest for jobs and freedom. At that time, the protest was the largest demonstration ever held in Washington, DC, while particularly receiving live national and international coverage in six countries. According to Mirkinson, the American Broadcast Company (ABC), National Broadcasting Company (NBC), and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) all televised the event. CBS was the only televised broadcast company showing the event in total and live compared to NBC’s eleven special reports. Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech would be institutionalized in American politics and social consciousness through constant re-broadcasting, replay and shared thought from then to the present day. In effect, the CRM used television for strategic purposes while organizing and mobilizing thousands of demonstrators in a continued fight for liberation and freedom, specifically for African Americans.

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According to Taeku Lee in *Mobilizing Public Opinion: Black Insurgency and Racial Attitudes in the Civil Rights Era*³¹ on August 22, 1964, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) for the purpose of unseating the official Mississippi delegation or be included with the official delegation. During a highly televised event and in an effort to be politically strategic, organizations of the Civil Rights Movement and key members appeared before the convention’s credentials committee. Civil Rights and key members desired inclusion to give testimony of the blocks continuing to hinder African Americans from registering to vote.

The most famous leader of the movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke at the televised convention. However, it was a Mississippi sharecropper and political activist, Fannie Lou Hamer, whose testimony was seen as greatest political threat. During Hamer’s live nationally televised appearance, President Lyndon Johnson held an impromptu press conference, perceived as a political strategy, to block the broadcast and lessen the mass appeal of this perceived political threat. Hamer’s live broadcast exposed her own brutalized experience to register to vote in Mississippi. Her appeal became so widely known that the presentation was re-broadcast later that night and for the next few days on national network television, curtailling efforts to block the live broadcast. The emotional appeal displayed by Hamer continued to be rebroadcast for days echoing her famous quote, “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired.” Her sentiments of living and being treated as a second-class citizen resonated throughout American homes via

television. On March 7, 1965 in Selma, Alabama, a nationally televised march and protest was globally broadcast proving state-sanctioned brutality of African-American citizens seeking rights to register to vote and full enfranchisement. Again, Dr. King and the SCLC sought to strategically provoke police brutality with non-violent direct action by capturing police behavior of misconduct via media and television. As protesters attempted to cross the Edmund Pettis Bridge into Selma, the police responded with extreme brutality towards the participants while being televised nationally. National and international outcry of this televised event provided evidence and proof of American governmental sanctions of brutality and anti-democracy policies with continued blocks of political participation against African Americans. Again, this televised event, known as “Bloody Sunday,” would be rebroadcast and replayed as a constant visual reminder of the political and social conditions African Americans protested.

Black Power Movement (1965–1975): Technology Precursor to Social Media

According to Timothy B. Tyson in the text, Radio Free Dixie, in the 1960s an African-American disc jockey Robert F. Williams went into exile for eight years as a result of his response to the acquittal of a white man who was perceived as a clear case of attempted rape of a pregnant African-American woman. He broadcasted on the air,

32. Lee, Mobilizing Public Opinion, 293.

33. Ibid.

“Since the federal government will not bring a halt to lynching in the South and since the so-called courts lynch our people legally then it is necessary to stop lynching with lynching, then we must be willing to resort to that method.”\textsuperscript{35} The response by the state was to lay false charges on Williams accusing him of kidnapping a white couple. Williams was forced into exile for eight years in the 1960s by a false charge of kidnapping a white couple. While exiled he broadcast across the United States a weekly radio show known as “Radio Free Dixie” challenging white supremacy while also playing African-American genre music.\textsuperscript{36} This communication platform was a significant technological tool of political involvement and expression ushering in the Black Power Movement on the Radio.

As television rose as the major mass communication vehicle for American society, radio use and ownership would begin to emerge among the African-American community. According to Tyson, On May 11, 1929, American broadcast radio premiered the first exclusively black performers on “The All-Negro Hour.”\textsuperscript{37} In 1946 the first black news discussion program “Listen Chicago” launched focusing on black issues and music of that day. Black radio would influence the popularity of their music by exposing other communities to black genres such as rhythm and blues and rock-n-roll. This expression of social capital resulted in lowering cultural barriers. The black disc jockey, similar to

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
the black journalist, became an agent of black social capital through news, music, and talk. The black disc jockeys dominated the African-American airplay during the 1950s and 1960s.

The 1970s marked a period of significant growth of African-American ownership and representation on the radio airways. Traditional AM radio format was more talk and the new FM radio format focused more on music. Black radio grew from 16 to 88 black-owned radio stations. In that, this period saw the emergence of Mutual Black Network and the National Black Network. In conjunction with individual black-owned radio stations, these two black-owned and operated radio networks provided a new landscape of wide scale communication network representing African-American social interests. However, governmental deregulation and subsequent media consolidation after this period created difficult conditions for black radio stations to survive.38

Well after the Black Power Movement, mass protests aligned with a movement among African Americans were few and far between. As stated earlier, in 1992, the police officers implicated in the Rodney King beatings being acquitted of all charges led to mass protest among African Americans in cities across the country. Black radio was instrumental in conveying significant information on stations such as KJLH located in South Central Los Angeles.

Research conducted by Phylis Johnson published in Political Communication entitled “Black Radio Politically Defined: Communicating Community and Political

Empowerment Through Stevie Wonder’s KJLH-FM, 1992-2002," documented the role of the radio station KJLH-FM played as an instrument of organization and mobilization during the Rodney King rebellion of civil unrest. The unrest followed the acquittal of four L.A. police officers in the Rodney King police brutality case. KJLH organized information to support food, shelter and emergency needs. The station temporarily dropped its music programming to provide news, public service, and coverage of the unrest. In addition, the station acted as central programming in supporting NBC Nightly News broadcasted live with Tom Brokaw and became a major network feeding into other black radio stations around the country. KJLH-FM countered the negative portrayal by network television with on the ground reports giving narratives and accountings from the African-American community. Consequently, political activism was the critical role the station played during the event as another example of how African Americans influenced the community using the technology and ownership of radio stations.40

The expanse of American Slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and the Black Power Eras all serve as significant stages and precursors to social media, protests and political engagement. Slavery used the technology of the coded systems hidden in the drum and “Negro” spirituals. Reconstruction laid the foundations for institution building and produced more enfranchisement behavior among blacks. The Jim Crow era used the technology of the printing press and newsprint to convey the African-

40. Ibid.
American narrative of disenfranchisement and brutality. The Civil Rights Era strategically used the technology of television to manipulate national and global social consciousness. The Black Power Movement used the technology of radio to bring political awareness and organizing at critical periods. Through each of these time spans, various relevant technologies were used to mobilize the political consciousness and offline political involvement.

Contextualizing Social Media and Technology Convergence

The review of literature provides a critical evaluation of previous research in a way that contextualizes the use of social media and research by analyzing the convergence of technology during the last few decades. The combination of social media and technology has been an ever-evolving convergence of digital innovations over the past thirty years. Convergence is defined as the process by which multiple industries and/or technologies integrate as co-dependent on a single technology.41 For example, from an industry standpoint, early corporate convergence was indicative of Bell Telephones and IBM computers towards a global communication infrastructure merging phone networks and Internet networks.42

Further, from a technological standpoint, the smart phone would become a convergence of the personal computer, internet, camera, video camera, infinite software applications, multimedia, and social media platforms. The Digital Age (also known as


42. Ibid.
the Computer Age, Information Age, or New Media Age) was a period characterized by the shift from previous industry based on industrialization to a digital industry based on information.\textsuperscript{43} In the same vain, the digital age is also characterized as a period shifting from traditional media to the added inclusion of social media. In context with mass protest participation integrated alongside of a movement, this evolution can be found through the personalization of individual empowerment by understanding the following factors: (1) the individual and digital globalization, (2) technology convergence integration, (3) the rise of social media, and (4) social media and the evolution of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

**The Individual and Digital Globalization**

The convergence of technology into the mobile phone has produced a global citizen with individual power in a digital economy of collaboration competing internationally. In the book, *The World is Flat*,\textsuperscript{44} Thomas L. Friedman referred to this phenomenon as globalization 3.0 and the flat-world platform. Friedman defined the unique character of individual empowerment by stating the following:

The phenomenon that is enabling, empowering, and enjoining individuals and small groups to go global so easily and so seamlessly. The flat-world platform is the product of a convergence of the personal computer (which allowed every individual suddenly to become the author of his or her own content in digital form) with fiber-optic cable (which suddenly allowed all those individuals to access more and more digital content around the world for next to nothing) with the rise of work flow software (which enabled individuals all


\textsuperscript{44} Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century* (New York: Macmillan, 2005), 404-606.
over the world to collaborate on that same digital content from anywhere, regardless of the distances between them). No one anticipated this convergence.45

Consequently, individuals in this new social media age have emerged as digital citizens whereby digital activism arises under a significant communication global network. According to Akin and Encina, “The Internet acts as the global system of interconnected computer networks that allows for widespread communication and the rapid exchange of information.”46 In concert with globalization 3.0 and global communication platforms, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram are resource tools for building social networks. With the use of smart phones (mobile devices) citizens can access the Internet interacting within social network platforms to engage in these social networks.47

According to research conducted by Chaffey, digital convergence and proliferation can be indicated through three user network platforms: (1) individual utilization of the Internet, (2) active social media users, and (3) active mobile phone users accessing social media. Accordingly, of the total world population of 7.3 billion people, 46 percent are active Internet users, 31 percent are active social media users and 27 percent are active mobile phone users accessing social media. Within the United States,

45. Ibid.


47. Ibid.
among 322.9 million total population, 85 percent are active Internet users, 59 percent are active social media users and 52 percent are accessing social media with their mobile phones.\footnote{48} In effect, the data suggest a significant number of global citizens, especially American citizens, are using social media as a major communication and media platform where the sharing of digital content has empowered the individual to connect with greater global reach.\footnote{49}

**Technology Convergence Integration**

From the microprocessor, to the personal computer and the smart phone (mobile phone), a variety of unique technologies have converged as integrated systems along with enhancing individual capabilities. According to Sivanandan in the study “Imperialism and Disorganic Development in the Silcon Age,”\footnote{50} the invention of the microprocessor’s impact was as transformative as steam and electricity for the industrial age. Further, the microprocessor ushered in the digital age by creating new modes of production based on an additional chip in a computer being integrated as the controlling device. This transformed the operations of many industries such as commerce, power plants, utilities, and automation among many others. The invention of the personal computer integrated job capabilities such as typing, filing, processing, retrieving, and transmitting, creating


\footnote{49} Sivanandan, “Imperialism and disorganic development in the silcon age,” 111-126.

\footnote{50} Akin et al., “Old Wine in a New Cask? Protest Cycles in the Age of the New Social Media,” 89.
new methods in which corporations and individuals conducted business. New social contracts were created in the workforce of workers, unions, and in the government. The personal computer for home use would also convert outdated social contracts and increase new skill based capabilities between the individual citizen and the telecommunications elite.\(^{51}\)

In 1990, the digital camcorder was invented making the video camera smaller, more affordable, and able to store digitized video. One year after the camcorder was introduced into American culture, multiple Los Angeles police officers were video recorded beating Rodney King, an African-American male, on the side of the road. The video captured the long legacy of African-American expression of perceived state sanctioned acts of police brutality and killing. On April 30, 1992, the police officers implicated in the Rodney King beatings were acquitted of all charges. In this incident, the camcorder became a witnessing tool of proof shared through traditional media for public consumption. The camcorder became a technological tool of empowerment for the individual citizen. Its use and capability to provide the average American access to technology that can be converted to mass viewership and consumption was major. Mass view on traditional media networks ignited protest among African Americans in cities across the country, including the Atlanta University Center.

This convergence of digital technologies and social justice would continue as other innovations concurrently emerged. On August 6, 1991, the Internet, also known as the world wide web, launched giving way to the creation of a new digital landscape. The

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
combining of the personal computer and the Internet would allow for the creation of web-based platforms enabling individuals and corporations access to new global growth towards mass communication and networks.

In 1994, Netscape’s invention of the search engine would provide another essential factor enabling corporate and individual capability to digitally organize and research information. This addition to the Internet would initiate the rapid growth of web based corporations known as dot.com corporations. With the invention of modern email in 1993, individuals would be able to interact with two-way forms of communication with individuals or groups without borders. The 1990s would become a period of growth personalizing the individual citizen’s ability to communicate, create and download information with global reach. In effect, this new digital economy would set the foundation for original digital authorship and content collaboration for uploading in the 21st century.

The Rise of Social Media

At the turn of the century, the 2000s would increase user capability by ushering in the capacity of individuals to create, interact, and upload digital content. Based on a chronology derived from CQ Research,52 the rise of social media in the 2000s formed major platforms of online communication. In 1997, SixDegrees.com begins as the first social networking site and closes by the year 2001. As other social networking sites such as Ryze and Myspace rise and fall, specific social networking platforms rose to full

integration inside a mass communication global network. Specifically, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram trended highly in usage numbers from 2004 through 2012.\(^{53}\)

According to research published by *CQ Researcher* in 2004, Facebook launched as a new social network platform amassing 140 million users by 2008. Facebook becomes the number one U.S. based online social media platform. By 2010, Facebook’s growth amassing over 500 million users is indicative of consistently integrating innovative applications that personalize the individual user experience.\(^ {54}\) According to Duggan and Brenner, by 2012 Facebook reaches 67 percent of individuals who have access to the internet.\(^ {55}\) Facebook remains the most popular social media site in 2015 by amassing 72 percent of Americans with access to the internet and 67 percent of African Americans with access to the internet.\(^ {56}\)

In another study by Duggan and Brenner, *“The Demographics of Social Media Users – 2012,”*\(^ {57}\) another social media platform also emerges. Twitter is a social media platform with its own unique evolution over the past 10 years. By posting its own

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.


messaging system known as “tweets,” Twitter’s individual users and digital postings have consistently grown from year to year. In 2007, Twitter users post 400,000 “tweets” per quarter increasing a year later to 100 million “tweets” per quarter. In 2010, Twitter reaches 100 million users and 65 million “tweets” per day with usage continuing to increase. In the same year, the Library of Congress began the process of acquiring the digital archives of Twitter marking a significant measure towards preserving American digital documentation. By 2012, Americans who had online access to the internet accrued 16 percent of internet users having Twitter accounts.\textsuperscript{58} Accordingly, this research conducted by Maeve and Brenner points out that Twitter has special appeal to urban African-American adults between the ages of 18 thru 29.\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, the growth of social media platform usage shows an increase with these major sites indicating individual usage and unique consumerism.

**Social Media and the Evolution of the #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM)**

The review of literature provides a critical evaluation of previous research on social media and the evolution of #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM). This begins with understanding several matters addressing the documentation of the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement alongside the organization of #BlackLivesMatter. First, there is literature documenting the way social media captured data concerning #BLM with increased use around incidences of police killings and other related events. Secondly, there is literature assessing the use of technological tools to evidence incidences as

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
indirect or direct witnessing tools. Thirdly, the literature also describes the use of Twitter. Lastly, literature shows research of political movements outside of the United States.

In research conducted by Pew Research Center, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) on the Twitter platform, has some documented patterns of shared incidences of people responding to police killing unarmed African Americans followed with mass protests. The evolution of the #BlackLivesMatter and the Black Lives Matter Movement coincides with the use of social media platforms documenting the number of posts, comments and sharing taking place on relevant subject matter. For example, in some incidences, indirect witnessing (IW) relates to non-video evidence, facts, and perceptions shared after an incident occurs. In other incidences, direct witnessing (DW) relates to video recorded evidence, facts, and perceptions shared visually showing an incident occurrence.

In both cases of IW and DW, individuals share and post incidences on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat. These represent key communication platforms to indicate the way the public shares their videos, photos, comments, and opinions on matters such as race, police misconduct and protest using the multi-platform linkages such as hashtags to share incidences and events. According to Anderson and Hitlin, the use of the hashtag #BLM indicated spiked responses on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook during specific incidences since #BLM was initiated in 2013.
Based on the date of the incident, research details the timeline quantifying the number of Twitter posts mentioning the hashtag #BLM.\textsuperscript{60}

On August 7, 2013 (IW), the hashtag #BLM is launched, reaching less than 10,000 posts, because of Trayvon Martin’s killer, George Zimmerman, being acquitted for the shooting death of an African American teenage boy. On July 17, 2014 (DW), less than 10,000 #BLM posts appeared concerning Eric Garner’s video captured by mobile phone of him being killed by a police officer thru affixation (choking) during what was perceived as a no probable cause arrest.\textsuperscript{61}

On August 9, 2014 (IW), less than 100,000 #BLM posts appeared concerning Michael Brown, an African-American teenager, killed by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. On November 14, 2014 (DW), an estimated 75,000 posts appear concerning a twelve-year-old African-American boy on a playground, playing with a toy gun, shot and killed by a police officer in Cleveland, Ohio and captured on video. On November 24, 2014 (IW), an estimated 200,000 posts appear concerning the Ferguson, Missouri prosecutor making a nationally televised announcement of the grand juror’s decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson in the killing of Michael Brown.\textsuperscript{62}

On April 14, 2015 (IW), an estimated 100,000 posts appear concerning Freddie Gray who was killed in the custody of Baltimore, Maryland police officers due to a spinal


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
cord injury. On June 17, 2015 (IW), an estimated 60,000 posts appear concerning a Charleston, South Carolina white man, Dylan Roof, after killing nine African-American churchgoers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church based on his own admonition of racial terrorism. On July 15, 2015 (IW/DW), an estimated 160,000 posts appear concerning an African-American woman, Sandra Bland, found hung in the Waller County, Texas jail after police camera video recording her being arrested for no apparent probable cause. On October 13, 2015, an estimated 125,000 posts appeared concerning presidential candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders, defending #BlackLivesMatter in a nationally televised debate.\textsuperscript{63}

As evidenced from this study and timeline, there is a gap in the number of posts mentioning #BLM, showing less than 10,000 times, compared to the first major spikes. This was indicative of a growing interest in the subject matter and hashtag. At the same time, the Tamar Rice incident garnered 125,000 #BLM posts ranking second compared to the Ferguson prosecution announcement approximating 200,000 #BLM posts. The hashtag #BLM posted an average of 58,747 times a day approximately three weeks after Michael Brown’s death while posting 1.7 million times three weeks following the grand jury decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson.\textsuperscript{64} Therefore, Twitter, as an example of social media platforms, captured the growth of the hashtag #BLM demonstrating public outcry, protest, opinions, and political awareness. Moreover, #BLM provides a

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
memorialized trail to analyze social media activism and the occurrence of protest participation.

In recent years, research has been primarily conducted studying movements of mass protest outside of the United States. In countries such as Chile, China, Egypt, and the 2011 uprisings of the Middle East, we find a common theme linking patterns and political behavior through the use of social media.\textsuperscript{65} Analyzing oppositional movements in Egypt from 2004–2011, Merlina Lim’s findings determined state sanctions towards the dissemination of information while social media platforms created new pathways of communication among the people and activists.\textsuperscript{66} Emerging characteristics are exampled in (1) the formation of networks, (2) the expansion of networks, (3) the sustainability of longstanding networks, and (4) facilitation of new connections. These characteristics of online political participation were determinants towards political mobilization efforts in Egypt.

Conversely, research conducted by Sean Aday suggested compelling findings indicative to offline or traditional political participation.\textsuperscript{67} Findings determined that the media, print newspaper, and the radio continued to be effective resources of political engagement, particularly regarding mobilization towards protest participation. By a margin of 93 percent of protest participants, citizens mobilized for protest as a result of


\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{67} Sean Aday, Henry Ferrel, John Sides, and Deen Freelon, “New Media and Conflict After the Arab Spring,” Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, July 2012.
viewing television network media on al-Jazeera.\textsuperscript{68} In addition, survey results also indicated that 92 percent of protestor participants mobilized using word of mouth. Only 13 percent of the protestor participants surveyed used social media network such as Twitter for information and/or mobilization purposes.\textsuperscript{69} At the time, these factors indicate that social media was not necessarily a major influencer compared to traditional media resources. Although social media was still relatively new and growing in 2012, traditional media along with word of mouth remained one of the most effective ways to transmit information towards protest participation.

According to research conducted by, Breuer, Landman, and Farquhar, by 2012, social media became a highly used global communication tool and one of the major technological resources more transformative than any other period in history.\textsuperscript{70} Early mass protest movement research conducted on the 2011 spring uprisings in the Middle East showed an emerging protest cycle related to this emerging technology.\textsuperscript{71} Ultimately, the research concluded suggesting social media usage increases individual political engagement.

To conclude, the literature provides critical documentation of previous research on social media and the evolution of #BlackLivesMatter. The literature found documentation on the way social media captured data concerning #BLM with increased

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
use around incidences and events. There is also research documenting the use of technological tools to evidence incidences as indirect or direct witnessing tools. Thirdly, the findings document the use of Twitter by the number of times individuals accessed specific hashtags indicating levels of collective participation on certain matters. Lastly, the literature shows research formulating the characteristics of early social media use during political movements outside of the United States.

**Social Media and Factors of Political Involvement**

A review of literature surrounding social media and factors of political involvement offer unique characteristics among African Americans using social media sites. In addition, the literature sought to define characteristics associated with conventional and unconventional political participation indicative of offline and online political behavior.

According to Mitchell et al. in a 2016 report titled “State of the News Media,” there had been a significant increase in African-American online sources for information compared to decreases in traditional sources of information. Specifically, the study showed significance in resources of black radio, newspapers, and magazines.

Reportedly, monthly online radio listenership had more than doubled since 2010 with listenership rising from 20 percent in 2007 to 57 percent by 2016. This meant that African-American individuals were listening to radio on the internet in increasing numbers. Black newspaper circulation trends were decreasing among *New York*

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Amsterdam News, Baltimore Afro-American, Washington Afro-American, Philadelphia Tribute and the Chicago Defender in a period between 2009 and 2015. For example, the Chicago Defender went from 11,158 subscriptions to 4,464 subscriptions. This was consistent with overall newspaper readership among Americans who were going to more online newspapers or resources for their news. From 2006 through 2015, black magazine circulation also decreased for Ebony and Jet with fluctuation trends occurring with Essence and Black Enterprise. In 2015, there were 12 black-owned television stations owned by four blacks.73

According to Ellen Grigsby in Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Political Science,74 conventional political engagement may include voting, running for office, donating to campaigns or political groups, attending political meetings, electoral involvement, and being a voice in the political arena. Thus, these characteristics of conventional political engagement or participation provide an understanding of general political behavior.

Unconventional political engagement, Grigsby asserted, may include signing petitions, attending demonstrations, organizing protests, strikes, and boycotts of voices formally unrepresented.75 These characteristics of unconventional political engagement

73. Ibid.


75. Ibid.
or participation describe what has been considered disenfranchisement behavior.\textsuperscript{76} However, when discussing black political engagement in American politics, it may be necessary to blend both conventional and unconventional characteristics in factors of political involvement among African Americans. A combination of characteristics may be necessary to provide an overall understanding of black protest participation in this study.

By taking the characteristics of political engagement, it is important to transform these characteristics into behavior consistent with internet and social media use. According to Yang and DeHart, conventional political engagement refers to activities taking place within the structure of government whereby individuals practice enfranchisement behaviors by selecting public officials as well as influencing policies. Online political participation behavior is defined according to the activities taking place in an online or an internet based association. These are (1) emailing a politician, (2) making a campaign contribution or donation online, (3) subscribing to a political listserv, (4) signing up to volunteer for a campaign/issue online, (5) sending a political message via email, and (6) emailing a letter to the editor of a newspaper online.\textsuperscript{77}

As discussed previously, candidate (and later President) Barack Obama used social media as an important tool towards mobilizing political support for both his campaigns in 2008 and 2012. In addition, First Lady Michelle Obama, also utilized


social media as a tool of political awareness and outcry. Therefore, research on political figures and political matters using social media to garner political support may develop baseline characteristics. This is done for the purpose of testing the degree to which social media influences individual online and offline political participation. While the review of scholarly material is essential to this research, other sources of literature, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post, offer an archival or timeline approach to understanding the evolution of phenomena such as the conjoining of social media and political involvement.

For example, according to journalist Juliet Eilperin of the Washington Post, documentation of the Obama’s use of social media to connect in the American political system showed initial characteristics of social media use offered some baseline factors toward political engagement. Eliperin’s report outlined the way political and social awareness initiatives offer individual political engagement by demonstrating how social media online behavior can be initially characterized. She described this political behavior to utilize social media by (1) sharing thematic posts, (2) exchange of comments of political expression, (3) signing electronic petitions, and (4) influencing global attention of political leadership and the public—factors directly relating to political engagement. This is supported by scholarly research as well.

According to Yang and DeHart’s published research in Social Media + Society titled "Social Media Use and Online Political Participation Among College Students"

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78. Juliet Eilperin, “Here’s How the First President of the Social Media Age Has chosen to connect with Americans,” The Washington Post, May 26, 2015.
During the US Election 2012, political engagement among internet users determines specific behavior. Based on the research, individuals as internet users on social media sites share their political views with friends, join interests groups, forward political videos, tweet or retweet political comments, publish blogs about important social and economic issues, and pin political multimedia.

According to Jensen et al. from the book, *Digital Media and Political Engagement Worldwide,* confronted with the relevancy of the digital age, traditional political participation was defined as offline while internet based political participation is defined as online. The text characterized offline political participation behavior with representative factors of voting, contracting, and party activity. Moreover, extra representative factors were defined as protest and consumerism.

Online behavior is considered as vertical unidirectional factors of online petitioning, donations, and contact. Moreover, horizontal interactive factors are blogging, posting political comments, and joining political groups in social networks. Lastly, the literature reported political information consumption portrays individual offline behavior as exposure to newspapers, television, or radio news offline. Online behavior determines exposure to online sources of information.

According to Valenzuela et al. in an article published in the *American Behavioral Scientist,* “Unpacking the Use of Social Media for Protest Behavior: The Roles of...”

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81. Ibid.
Information, Opinion Expression, and Activism,” research suggested there is justification for the study of Internet effects on mobilizing and reinforcing participation. Moreover, there is a distinction between online and traditional participation. The study hypothesized the “frequency of social media use will be positively related to protest behavior.” Although this research did not verify participation, the research provided a basis for confirming frequency of social media use that relates political behavior and protest behavior. This study reviewed questions to individuals by looking at (1) social media as a source for news, (2) social media as a space for political expression, (3) social media as a tool for joining causes and finding mobilization information.

The *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* published research by Cristian Vaccari et al., titled, “Political Expression and Action on Social Media: Exploring the Relationship between Lower and Higher Threshold Political Activities Among Twitter Users in Italy,” that provided research to understand the level of social media usage and political engagement. To determine whether individuals engaged in previous activities, the research used three different dependent variables. To determine online participation behavior these variables consisted of (1) contacting politicians by email, (2) using social media to campaign for a candidate or a party, and (3) participating in offline political events after receiving an online invitation.

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83. Ibid.

84. Vaccari et al., “Political Expression and Action on Social Media: Exploring the Relationship Between Lower- and Higher-Threshold Political Activities Among Twitter Users in Italy, 221-239.

85. Ibid.
Protest Participation

A review of literature surrounding social media and political organizing and strategizing offers factors for consideration. According to Social Media and Political Participation (SMaPP) Laboratory of NYU, political science may often use the framework of a collective action problem to discuss why individuals may choose to join a protest. Individuals join protests for the following reasons: (1) Group goals to achieve, (2) individual participation in the group, (3) group benefit versus individual action, and (4) the importance of information. Moreover, SMaPP asserts the importance of information whereby social media can play a significant role for individual participation through six factors of Information: protest planning, location and timing, safety of participation, current number of participants, triggered feelings of group identity, triggered feelings of injustice and triggered emotions such as anger.

A study by Christina Neumayer and Luca Rossi, “15 years of Protest and Media Technologies Scholarship: A Sociotechnical Timeline”86 in Social Media + Society found that social media can impact protest. The study characterized the impact of social media by determining in 2011, that a new cycle of protests began outside of the United States, generating new research methods and capturing baseline characteristics of social media influences during protest movements. Accordingly, a study conducted by J. A. Tucker titled Protest in the Age of Social Media87 outlines factors precipitating organizing a


protest from cases with the past five years. These factors of online organizing are indicative of (1) the manner protest movements build with speed, (2) recruiting new members, (3) encouraging participation, and (4) spreading information. Based on this research, social media use has shown indicators that show mobilization towards the protests build with speed as individuals spread information and relevant networks. This also includes receiving foreign support and interests since social media also acts as a major broadcasting network of information.

According to a study by S. Aday et al. in a report titled “New Media and Conflict after the Arab Spring,” other factors were also documented through social media usage during protest movements during the Arab Spring. These findings were published by the United States Institute of Peace. There were indicators that social media was a determining factor in the organizing of online political participation. These factors were the formation of social networks to establish (1) an online presence of organization, (2) social network expansion and content sharing, (3) the facilitation of new connections, and (4) creating and supporting information narratives around issues such as state-sanctioned repression.

Although research has found positive characteristics associated with social media

88. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
use during protest movements, there are cases that have shown traditional methods of participation still applied where greater numbers of protest participants receiving information to physically protest were derived by traditional media and word of mouth igniting collective action. Social media was only a small contributor to collective action towards physically protesting, yet these characteristics differed in other cases. By reviewing the characteristics of previous cases, social network analysis and protest movement may determine new insights. This means there may be more relevance to test traditional methods versus new platform methods to understand the manner in which blacks are engaging the BLMM protest movement.

**Black Lives Matter Movement and Social Media Activism**

As discussed in an earlier section of this paper, the black community in America has had a long history of contentious political participation through enfranchisement and disenfranchisement behavior. This contentious political behavior includes use of social media networks and offers insight into the black political experience through digital activism. Today, 43 percent of Americans recognize and support the present day social media and political mobilization during mass protest movements are demonstrating the significance of the mobile phone as a major tool and resource. In addition, the individual, and the empowered concept of personalization, suggested that new mobilization techniques and efforts in the new age require more flexibility rather than effectiveness. Overall, research on the influences of social media towards the elements of political

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92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.
engagement shows that the newness of research characteristics gained from the most current protest movements must be tested to fill the gaps associated with the rise of social media use, mobile phone personalization and the Black Lives Matter Movement.

In research conducted by Elizabeth Schwarz at the University of California, Riverside in a paper titled *Political Mobilization Through Online Social Networks*, the researcher documents the impact of the internet on civic engagement and social movement activity. This includes online engagement and offline engagement especially in opposition to traditional media resource involvement. Schwarz identifies three contributions the Internet brings to collective action: (1) organization, logistics, and networking between groups, (2) a way of expressing dissent and protest, and (3) information dissemination.

Schwarz further outlines research unpacking the manner in which individuals use the internet to mobilize political action. This includes online petitioning, boycotting, emailing and letter-writing campaigns. Moreover, this also includes hyperlinking communication among individuals to either find multiple points of entry onto political actions and/or to spread uncensored messages to organizations, conventional institutions, groups, and individual networks throughout the internet.

In summary, factors of political involvement is a blending of conventional and unconventional characteristics merging behaviors of voting, running for office, donating to campaigns or political groups, attending political meetings, electoral involvement, being a voice in the political arena, signing petitions, attending demonstrations,

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organizing protests, strikes, and boycotts of voices formally unrepresented. This is certainly true for groups traditionally disenfranchised, oppressed, and/or rights suppressed both socially and politically. Therefore, the African-American political experience employs a wider definition than traditional definitions of political engagement. To add, there may be emerging relationships between traditional political behavior and online political behavior. Individuals (African Americans) are using the internet are using social media to express their political views, organize political events, email politicians and ultimately participate in offline political events.

In addition, social media activism may be considered a critical component of the Black Lives Matter Movement. Political participation and mobilization during mass protest movements show that the convergence of technological resources inside the mobile phone is a major tool of personalization and individual power. Individual empowerment of personalization has produced new mobilization techniques. Also among individuals, internet use in related information shows a strong relationship within factors of political involvement. In effect, online mobilization efforts can be characterized by organization, logistics, networking between groups, a way of expressing dissent, information dissemination and hyperlinking two-way or dynamic uncensored messaging communication, and collaboration.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The review of literature of theoretical underpinnings provides a critical evaluation of previous research. Specifically, the review covers (1) political process theory and (2) social capital theory, while also mentioning the cross pollination of other theories.
**Political Process Theory (PPT)**

Early research on social movement theory evolving into Political Process Theory is the basis of understanding the conditions of a present-day social justice movement. Social movement theory includes another concept called resource mobilization theory. In an article published in *Plos One* titled “The Critical Periphery in the Growth of Social Protests,” 95 Pablo Barbera et al. gave an account of the concept of collective action. This account of early research of resource mobilization theory determined the effective mobilization of resources towards collective action and the manner in which movements grow. Barbera said the following:

Research on collective action has long emphasized the importance of resource mobilization to understand the success of social movements. Generalized discontent is a precondition for social protests to arise, but the ability to reach, recruit, and organize participants is what allows initial sparks to spread like ‘wildfires,’ to use one common analogy in historical accounts of contentious politics. Resource mobilization theories often measure success by the number of participants mobilized, which is assumed to increase as a function of the number of participants who are already active. Critical mass theories aim to identify the factors that cause participation to become self-sustaining that is, they focus on how and why the number of participants reaches a tipping point—the moment when the spark becomes a wildfire. 96

The general discontent in this study identifies police brutality in the killings of unarmed African Americans as the precondition for social protests that have arisen since 2014. Social media has been a major tool to reach, recruit, and organize participants creating the conditions of organization and mobilization to spread like “wildfires.” The online influence toward offline behavior to protest can be captured in accounting the number of

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96. Ibid.
participants attending rallies, town hall meetings, and demonstrations. As a result, a measurement can be attributed to the link between an incident of police brutality, social media, and protest participation.

The Political Process Theory (PPT) is the evolved theory emanating from social movement theory and resource mobilization theory. PPT can also be attributed to framing the present-day social justice movement. The evolution of this theory is succinctly described in the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* that outlined the research by Neal Caren. Caren, Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam shared similar views on crystallizing PPT in their respective works: *Mobilization to Revolution* (1978) and *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (1982). Charles Tilly’s work fully integrated the contentious views of protestors by blending traditional and fringe political perspectives. McAdams developed PPT further by characterizing political opportunities, indigenous organizational strength, and cognitive liberation by studying the civil rights movement as a model. Caren described the combined elements of Tilly and McAdam within PPT with the addition of (1) political opportunities, (2) mobilizing structures, (3) framing processes, (4) protest cycles, and (5) contentious repertoires. In essence, social media usage and political engagement can be studied by these same characteristics during the present day social justice movement.

Caren proclaimed that PPT continues to be a primary paradigm for social movement research. As theorists regress from general causal arguments of PPT, more

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dynamic approaches to the study of contentious politics have been modified and refined. This has been accomplished by identifying the specific mechanisms influencing characteristics across multiple movements. Similar and unique outcomes may also be indicated in the present-day social justice movement.

*Social Media + Society* published the article “15 Years of Protest and Media Technologies Scholarship: A Sociotechnical Timeline” by Christina Neumayer and Lucca Rossi giving insight on the research of protest and media technologies scholarship during a 15 year study. From 2000 to 2014, this study constructed a sociotechnical timeline asserting some generally necessary dynamics important to social media and protest. Neumayer and Rosse’s findings of networked activism provided considerations surrounding digital communication technologies and how social media networks may have been adopted and shaped protest movements and political engagements. Earlier studies differed evolving into new methods of approach with the year 2011 being designated as a pivotal point when empirical research began to dominate research on this topic of social media and protest behavior. The authors stated the following:

> Until 2007, qualitative methods were the main technique of empirical inquiry, and it is only within the past 5 years that quantitative methods have become the major technique…Social network analysis has become extremely relevant since 2012, whereas qualitative case studies were the main approach between 2002 and 2003 but have had a rather limited presence over the past few year.\(^\text{100}\)

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99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.
This study identifies the early research using qualitative method study while later research used quantitative methods of study. This study ended in 2014 and asserted that quantitative methods of research are major methods of approach. For example, research centers such as Pew Research Center and New York University Social Media and Political Participation (SMaPP) laboratory continue specific research centered on social media and protest among agencies. A new protest cycle among blacks in America could be argued began in 2014. Nevertheless, a case for qualitative significance can be made as well due to the limited research focusing on black protest and movement in recent years.

Therefore, since mass protests of police killings began, from Trayvon Martin in 2013, to Ferguson in 2014, and most recently, Keith L. Scott in 2016, new research on social media, mass protest, and political behavior are important to gaining perhaps qualitative and quantitative understandings. Based on the some foundational linkages shown in previous research, some new factors and dynamics addressing social media and protest may indicate unique and nuanced outcomes about the influence of social media on the present-day social justice movement in America.

Hill’s four standards can be contextualized by viewing examples of African-American experience using various media outlets. Again, in short, standards toward liberation strategies, opposing white power structure in media, identifying levels of involvement, and the use social media to influence public policy. Viewing these standards may be shown in the example of African-American media behavior.

To conclude, social movement theory or resource mobilization theory have evolved into political process theory. Political process theory combines five elements in the study of mass protests and movements by combining (1) political opportunities, (2) mobilizing structures, (3) framing processes, (4) protest cycles, and (5) contentious repertoires. There is baseline research for both quantitative and qualitative methods in the study of social media platform use and individual participation in protest. This is achieved by examining the degree in which social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram, translate into increased protest movement activity among African Americans can be measured.

**Social Capital Theory (SCT)**

In this study, social capitalism is defined as the surplus control of global information distribution by nation-states or privately-owned corporations controlling traditional media and therefore the major influencers of political socialization of mass populations. In a new information economy towards adaptive integration of new technologies, social media provides individuals and groups the capability to globalize digital content that can countermand traditional narratives of socialization. Prior to discussing social capital theory a foundational discourse may be needed in order to understand the concept of capital itself of those who derived insight from theorists such as Karl Marx’s critique of capital. Contextually, blacks have had a unique experience under a global culture of capital accumulation. Therefore, social capital in this section will discuss social capital theory by discussing (1) capital, (2) information capital, (3) social capital, and (4) social networking theory.
Among people of African descent or blacks, the discussion of capital and/or capitalism can be applied when discussing the non-elite or exploited populations within capital hegemony. Walter Rodney described the significance of capital and social relations in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* on the subject of capitalism. He stated, “In human society it has always been the case that expansion of the economy leads eventually to a change in the form of social relations.” At critical points of transitions, Rodney points out the significance of critical stages over the last few hundred years. He outlined five stages of major transition: (1) communalism, (2) slavery, (3) feudalism, (4) capitalism, and (5) socialism. He also stated, “Economically, each succeeding stage represented development in the strict sense that there was increased capacity to control the material environment and thereby to create more goods and services for the community.” In the case of information and social capital, Rodney’s assertion to control the material environment can imply control of the mass communication environment to create social contracts among those lacking the power to disseminate information.

Rodney’s point illustrated the increase of European cultural acquisition of capital in economics producing an ever-evolving political culture of hegemony and capital control. This political culture of control was not limited to economics, but suggests the creation of multiple industry monopolies crossing various business enterprises.

Accordingly, Claude Ake in *A Political Economy of Africa*\(^{103}\) described monopolization as the mean of production: “Capitalist mode of production polarizes into a very small group of people who monopolizes the available means of production, and the vast majority who essentially have no means of production—those who have no means of production only have their labour power to fall back on.”\(^{104}\)

Ake made the argument of monopolization as a major mechanism to create various groups, identified as most the population, who have limited access to capital and the limited means to produce surplus capital. Therefore, industries such as the newspapers and media are monopolized by a small group of people providing one-way communication to the masses of people.

Similarly, Kwame Nkrumah’s work, *Neo-colonialism the Last State of Imperialism*\(^{105}\) discussed the manner in which capitalism produced conditions of economic monopolies among industries. For example, Nkrumah suggested a critical process of amalgamation was first driven by industrial enterprises along with the combined partnership and monopolization of the banking industry. His analysis emphasized this process created conditions for commercial enterprises and banks towards the acquisition of capital. This was coupled with the primary intention of global imperialism. Nkrumah also stated, “From middlemen, originally performing the role of


\(^{104}\) Ibid.

simple moneylenders, the banks grew into powerful monopolies, having at their command almost the whole means of production and of resources of raw materials of the given country and in a number of countries.\textsuperscript{106}

Nkrumah emphasized the creation of a hierarchical structure in the accumulation of capital and the manner in which African people and countries have been forced to submit to the imperial designs of Western civilization. In effect, commercial enterprises developed political structures to be able to make power driven decisions for other people and countries. This mostly benefited the counties, commercial enterprises, and the middlemen of western countries. In effect, Nkrumah addressed how capital acquisition has been a driving force in the global political culture that has not only benefited the white power structure through economics, but has also created a political culture to monopolize resources among humans, culture, information, and social capital enterprises.

According to Arun Kundnani’s article, “Where do you want to go today? The rise of information capital?” in \textit{Race and Class},\textsuperscript{107} capital accumulation, class division and imperialism remain significant to the world economy. The author stated, “Under information capitalism, the surplus emerging from the advanced industrial regions is invested in high-tech innovation, marketing and other sectors of the informational economy which give opportunities for imperialist forays into the Third World.”

Kundnani suggested the concept of a global information infrastructure, led by the United States government, seeks to establish global rules, policies, and laws in the free

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

trade of information. Therefore, there is significance in the efforts to established global legal frameworks covering the fields of broadcasting, the internet, telecommunications and intellectual property. This same attempt to establish controls in these fields also suggests the influences in the field of social media. However, social media has offered differences that empower the individual’s information accumulation, distribution, and ability to market ideas to other individuals globally.

Nan Lin contextualized what he described as a classical theory of Marx’s theory of capital in the article, “Building a Network Theory of Social Capital.” Accordingly, Nan defined the notion of capital as surplus value accumulated by capitalists (economically elite group or the bourgeoisie). He discussed the elite as members of society who control the means of production. Therefore, controlling the means of production meant controlling the circulation of commodities. Further, monies between the production and consumption processes are also mechanisms of elite control. Lin stated,

In these circulations, laborers are paid for their labor (commodity) with a wage allowing them to purchase commodities (such as food, shelter, and clothing) to sustain their lives (exchange value). But the commodity processed and produced by the capitalists can be circulated to and sold in the consumption market at a higher price (user value). In this scheme of the capitalist society, capital represents two related but distinct elements. On the one hand, it is part of the surplus value generated and pocketed by the capitalists (and their ‘miser,’ presumably the traders and sellers). On the other hand, it represents an investment (in the production and circulation of commodities) on the part of the capitalists, with expected returns in a marketplace. Capital, as part of the surplus value, is a product of a process;

whereas capital is also an investment process in which the surplus value is produced and captured.”109

Nan’s description of capital determined the existence of systems that support the acquisition of resources and monies. Concurrent to the growth of economic capital, information capital and social capital may have also evolved in the same global environment. In essence, Nan built a case whereby the concept of capital may be discussed in the fields of economics, human, information and social.

Specifically, Nan defined social capital as “investment in social relations with expected returns. Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits.”110 He further elaborated on three reasons why embedded resources in social networks will enhance the outcomes of action: (1) Information, (2) influence, (3) social credentials, and (4) reinforcement.

Information links to social ties specifically associated with a flow of information that provides opportunities for individuals. For example, an individual’s personal networks on social media may have a flow of information that is of interest to other individuals or groups. On the other hand, influence is aligned to social ties centered on the individual who has strategic relationships among others in positions of hierarchy providing critical information. This is exampled through individuals who may recruit others in their social justice organization as a result of their influence due to prior social ties. Social credentials of an individual provide accessibility to resources beyond personal capital to include an additional range of resources. For example, individuals

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid.
may use their position or organizational affiliations to provide a location to organize a protest, provide access to funding a social justice organization, or provide other general resources. Lastly, reinforcements are essential in the area of identity and recognition. Individual recognition, shared group interests, and emotional support are indicative of personal and collective mental health, entitlement to resources, and engagement. Therefore, information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement all provide critical elements in the analysis of social media’s influence of individuals utilizing their social ties and networks.

Toran Hansen defined social networks in an article titled “Applying Social Network Theory and Analysis in the Struggle for Social Networks:”

Social networks are considered to be enduring patterns of relationships between interdependent social actors who exchange valued resources in relational social structures that constrain and enable their exchanges. These patterns can be either emergent, simply existing as part of a larger social structure, or purposefully created, goal-directed, and manageable, as is the case with inter-organizational networks.111

Hansen also determined there are three ways social network theory and analysis can assist applied researchers who are struggling for social justice: (1) mapping social structures, (2) creating, building, and managing social networks, and (3) building social capital among disadvantaged groups. Mapping social structures is centered on the issue of police brutality against African Americans as a social media driven occurrence of direct witnessing through mobile video or indirect witnessing of shared information. Creating, building, and managing social networks are indicative of the online behavior of African Americans on social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat

111. Ibid.
and Instagram. Lastly, building social capital among disadvantaged groups is indicative of demonstrating the differences of how blacks politically engaged using traditional media versus social media networks.

According to Brian Loader’s article titled “Young Citizens in the Digital Age: Political Engagement, Young People and New Media”112 there are new behaviors to be studied in a global information economy. The formal political behavior—voting, campaigning, and being a part of political parties—does not encapsulate all political behavior. The formal interaction is no longer the same. Loader asserted that the online behavior of emailing politicians and social media engagement is the new manner in which a global information economy politically engages.

To conclude, traditional media has been a primary distribution of social capital or information. The hegemony of white power structure between economic capitalism and social capitalism as the currency of information becomes the object of political power. This suggests the currency of information was held under the control of an elite few controlling the distribution of wealth influencing political knowledge for public consumption. Similarly, yet problematic, limited research has been done on how the information age, also known as digital age, has affected black political engagement against the backdrop of a governing authority. By replacing the framework outlining hegemonic experiences of imperialism and economic capitalism with social capital, new insights may shed light on current discussions around black political power.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The major objectives of this chapter are to present a conceptual framework for describing the relationships between variables and concepts presented and to provide an overview of the methods used in carrying out this study. The study was conducted to understand the degree social media use influences elements of political involvement characterized as political engagement, political awareness, social media activism, and political participation towards individual protest participation. The following areas are discussed in this chapter: research design, description of the site, sampling and population, instrumentation, and treatment of the data.

Research Design

An explanatory research design was used in this study of the degree to which social media usage influences the elements of political involvement towards levels of protest participation among African Americans participating in the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement. Components of individual protest participation include social media use, political engagement, political awareness, and social media activism. This study design theorizes the influence of protest participation (PP) by one or more of the subsequent variables: (1) Social Media Usage (SMU), (2) Political Engagement (PE),
(3) Political Awareness (PA), and (4) Social Media Activism (SMA) which consists of online and offline mobilization.

A schematic model for this conceptualization is illustrated in Figure 1. Definitions of the diagram concepts and their interrelationships follow.

![Figure 1. Schema of conceptual model explaining factors associated with social media usage influencing protest participants.](image)

As shown in Figure 1, characteristics of political awareness influence the characteristics of social media usage. Likewise, the characteristics of political awareness influence the characteristics of political engagement. Similarly, the characteristics of political awareness influence the characteristics of social media activism. The characteristics of social media use influence the characteristics of political engagement. To add, social media use influences the characteristics of political engagement. The
characteristics of social media influence the characteristics of social media activism. Therefore, characteristics of social media usage influence the characteristics of protest participation. Characteristics of social media activism influence the characteristics of protest participation. Lastly, the characteristics of political engagement influence the characteristics of protest participation. Upon individual protestors being aware of national incidences, a baseline of various political characteristics can lead to increasing individual protest participation. Considering social media influences individuals to participate in protest, other characteristics of political involvement are discussed within engagement, awareness, activism and participation. These factors resolve a single linear impact and/or multi-linear impact. Essentially, the degree of influence deriving from social media use may increase the level of involvement individuals participate in protests.

The above explanations may be shown in the form of the following statistical models. Each model represents a structural equation.

1. PA \(\rightarrow\) SMU
2. PA \(\rightarrow\) PE
3. PA \(\rightarrow\) SMA
4. SMU \(\rightarrow\) PE
5. SMU \(\rightarrow\) SMA
6. SMU \(\rightarrow\) PP
7. SMA \(\rightarrow\) PP
8. PE \(\rightarrow\) PP
9. PA + SMU + PE+ SMA \rightarrow PP

10. PA + SMU + PE + PP \rightarrow SMA

The analytical procedures to be used in measuring the above specified modes will be a series of Linear regression equations. A generic formula for model regression equation is

\[ Y = a + \sum b_i x_i + e, \]

where,

- \( Y \) = the dependent variable in a given equation
- \( X_i \) = independent variable
- \( i-th \) independent variable in the equation corresponding to “y”
- \( a \) = intercept
- \( b_i \) = beta or regression coefficient corresponding to \( i-th \) Independent variable
- \( e \) = error term

Once all structural equations are rested, the significant variables will be identified and conceptual model will be modified based on empirical results.

**Description of the Site**

The research focuses on African-American men and women residing in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia who have participated in some form of protest within the last four years. Multiple sites were selected for this study including social justice organizations, organizations with social justice agendas, individuals not in a group/organization, national organizations, and university students in organizations or field related courses within a local Atlanta base. Social justice organizations and HBCUs (historically black colleges & universities) include individuals whose primary engagement may incorporate protesting on issues concerning African Americans.
Individuals not in a group/organization may also serve as individuals who have participated in protest. Individuals associated with national organizations locally who have participated in protest are also included. Lastly, individuals matriculating in undergraduate and graduate related studies courses and departments or in organizations traditionally associated with social justice.

The instrument was administered online through platforms such as social media platforms, email list servers, and text messaging among individuals living in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Specifically, organizational meetings of organizations or groups included going onsite to the various locations where individuals assemble.

The city of Atlanta is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a metropolitan area, (i.e., <50,000+ population). Based on the 2010 statistics and 2015 estimations, statistics indicate that Atlanta has over 420,003 thousand residents, the largest city in the Southeast. Atlanta is a municipality within Fulton County, and has a portion of its physical boundaries within DeKalb County. Fulton County ranks as the 15th largest county in Georgia, with a total population of 920,581 according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The black population in Fulton County is 44.3 percent or 407,817.

Atlanta is the site of Booker T. Washington’s famous speech “Atlanta Compromise” in 1895, at the Cotton States and International Exposition ushering in the 20th century. He was lauded as the new African-American leader upon the death of African-American leader, Fredrick Douglass. The Atlanta University Center (AUC) is a center piece, notable for historical black colleges and universities such as Atlanta University where the famous leading academician W.E.B. DuBois taught and ignited
political and social thought. Another famous African-American leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born and raised in Atlanta taking upon himself, the tradition of activism and social change.

Atlanta’s African-American community has endured a significant legacy of political and social upheavals due to racial tensions, which includes the 1906 race riot and the city where the Civil Rights Movement met to strategize efforts, at famous sites such as Pascal’s Restaurant, towards social change. In April of 1992, Atlanta and the Atlanta University Center (AUC) were in widespread protest in the aftermath of the four L.A. police officer’s acquittal igniting the Rodney King rebellion causing an AUC student uprising.

The AUC houses Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Interdenominational Theological Center, and formerly Morris Brown College. In addition, the AUC was a center place for the famous Student Movement in the 1960s. This university center has given intellectual birth to many famous political figures such as the first black mayor of Atlanta, Maynard Jackson, a graduate of Morehouse College. Black mayoral candidates have fared well in Atlanta with Andrew Young followed by others such as Bill Campbell, Maynard Jackson for another term, Shirley Franklin, and current Mayor Kasim Reed. The 2017 field of candidates includes great number of African-American candidates such as Atlanta City Council members Keisha Lance Bottoms, Kwanza Hall, John Eaves, and Caesar Mitchell. Other African-American elected officials are also represented by Georgia State Senator Vincent Fort and Fulton County Commissioner Rob Pitts.
Atlanta provides a rich history of political and community involvement of African-American organizations. To name a few current and traditional organizations: The Davis Bozeman Law Firm Community Services Division, Let Us Make Man (LUMM), Sankofa Church of God, Sisterhood Alliance, Malcolm X Grassroots Organization, Nation of Islam (NOI), Us Lifting Us (ULU), Its Bigger Than You, Black Lives Matter Atlanta, Save OurSelves (SOS), Black Lives Matter Greater Atlanta, The Community of Atlanta (COA), National Action Network (NAN), the offices of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to list a few.

Sample Procedure and Population

The sample population for this study was African Americans who have participated in local or national protests centered on the present-day social justice movement, also known as Black Lives Matter Movement. One hundred twenty (120) survey participants responded to the study for which they were selected, utilizing purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. The survey participants were composed of protest participants from organizations with Black Lives Matter Movement agendas, historically black colleges and university students, and individuals who participated in Black Lives Matter Protesting online and offline among African Americans who currently live in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. It was the goal of this study to obtain participation from no less than 100 participants.

The sample framework for this study involved African-American men and women who have participated in protest or have had active interest on social media responding to incidences of police killing of African Americans including related subject matter. Many
of these individuals are presently participating or have participated in the organizations mobilizing the community to assemble around this issue during meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches, vigils, and town hall meetings. The Atlanta University Center also serves as a space to obtain participants. The AUC consists of Clark Atlanta University, Spelman College, Morehouse College, and the Interdenominational Theological Center. Many organizations and groups, especially those using social media and email list servers, maintain electronic databases as well as records of current and former participants. This also includes volunteer support acquired by these organizations.

Most study participants participated in protest demonstrations since George Zimmerman’s acquittal in the death of Trayvon Martin in 2013 through the Keith Lamont Scott incident of 2016 and the present day. Other examples of these local and national mass protests based on police killings may have involved Michael Brown of Ferguson, MI; Freddie Gray of Baltimore, MD; Sandra Bland of Waller County, TX, Walter Scott of Charleston, SC; Eric Garner of New York, NY; Philando Castille of Minneapolis, MN; and Terrence Crutcher of Tulsa, OK. In many of these nationally covered cases along with similar Georgia cases, Atlanta activists and protestors have mobilized for local demonstrations, rallies, and town hall meetings.

Initially, a sample size to pilot test of 20 participants was administered from an electronic distribution system. The 20 respondents belong to a local social justice oriented organization and were met by the researcher during one of their regularly scheduled meetings. Creative triangulation approach involving the researcher and
respondents was used to validate the responses. Allowing the organization representatives to complete the instrument alongside the respondents was an action sought to eliminate social distance between the researcher and participants. Additionally, the organization representative is the middle ground person who understands the goals of the study and the respondent’s level of understanding and is one of the volunteers administering the survey. This process also serves as added interview training allowing greater ability to respond to participants should they raise questions.

Respondents were administered the survey instrument using the online software tool Google Form. Each respondent was texted and emailed the hyperlink giving access to the survey instrument. The initial mobile text hyperlink did not work for some and, therefore, the researcher made an immediate adjustment by creating the selection to shorten the URL link as an option from the Google Form Send button. The researcher then resent the hyperlink with successful completion outcomes. This manner of hyperlinking to the survey using the cell phone and text worked more favorably than the long hyperlink.

Feedback from the respondents allowed the researcher to document respondent issues whereby the drop-down menu for question 4 on “My religious affiliation” may have been initially confusing since other questions were either dialog bubbles choices to select or typed in response answers. Respondents also identified a missing income range on question 10 ranging from $45,000 - $49,999. Most respondents completed the survey in less than eight minutes. Two respondents felt the survey was too long.
In another survey sample administration, 16 hardcopy survey instruments were administered to political science students on the campus of Clark Atlanta University. Results from the hardcopy sample answers 43 and 44 were the same. Since all students were university students, the researcher recognized that some students answered Question 11 asking “How many years of schooling have you completed” were mixed with Secondary or University as answers. Therefore, more clarity on Question 11 was necessary for future administrations. Lastly, the hardcopy survey instrument on questions 12 through 17 frequency row was running the opposite direction of all other similar frequency questions throughout the instrument. The researcher made an adjustment by reversing the frequency row for future administrations.

A final count of 120 participants was selected from the database and the completed hardcopies survey instruments.

Instrumentation

A self-administered survey entitled Social Media Usage and Social Justice Survey (see Appendix A) was constructed in consultation with the research advisors at Clark Atlanta University and pilot tested on February 8, 2017, before it was finalized. The final survey instrument consisted of six sections, totaling 51 questions. Section I solicited respondents’ demographic information—gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and religious affiliation. Section II asked for socioeconomic information including questions pertaining to zip code, community description, occupation, employment status, income, and education of the protestor. The rationale for these questions was anchored in the theoretical grounds that social media usage behavior may have contributed to the offline
behavior of protest participation. Looking at the framework of online political involvement one might assume a greater variance between protestors social media use and social media activism.

Section III included questions pertaining to overall social media usage. The purpose of these questions was specifically to examine which social media platforms protestors used to engage in political participation and protest participation. Literature showed that social media network affiliation directly related to the degree of offline political participation. Therefore, this section also solicited responses on these variables. Sample items included “How often do you use Facebook?” and “Considering your most frequently used social media site, how many contacts/friends/followers do you have?”

Sections IV focused on political engagement and protest participants’ political leanings. The questions included were directly related to involvement factors. This information was helpful to determine the validity of formal political involvement as well as the degree of participation towards protest participation. An analysis of this information was necessary not only to measure the overall conventional political behavior, but also to identify what conditions might have predisposed an individual to take part in protests.

Sections V focused on political awareness and the protest participants’ manner of expressing their opinions and learning about political issues. The questions directly related to political involvement factors. This information was helpful to determine the validity of how the protest participant engaged in political matters. The seven questions in this section looked at the individual protestor’s last three years of behavior measuring
the frequency of engagement in following elected officials, learning about political
causes, and the rate in which they expressed their opinions on political issues. This also
includes measuring whether or not the protestors expressed opinions on police brutality
and misconduct.

Within this section were seven questions concerning the degree to which social
media activism influenced protestor participation. These questions solicited questions
concerning the degree which unconventional political involvement measure the
protestor’s level of posting links about political stories or articles for others to read,
joining social media groups associated with Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement
initiatives, and being involved with online communities or groups sharing the same social
justice goals.

Sections VI focused on political participation. The questions included directly
relate to unconventional political involvement factors. This information was helpful to
determine the validity of informal political involvement as well as the degree of
participation towards individual protest. An analysis of this information was necessary
not only to measure the overall unconventional political involvement, but also to identify
other characteristics that may have predisposed an individual to take part in protests.
Specifically, the instrument collected data from participants to ascertain the rate protest
participants engaged in Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement protests during the
last three years.
Reliability Analysis

Reliability is the accuracy or precision of an instrument. Statistically, it measures the proportion of the “true” variance to the total of obtained variance of the data either by a measuring instrument. Another means of looking at reliability is the proportion of error variance to the total variance either by a measuring instrument subtracted from 1.00, the index 1.00 indicating perfect reliability. Thus, the reliability coefficient varies between 0 and 1 indicating 0 as no reliability and 1 as perfect reliability. Chronbach’s alpha provides a coefficient of internal consistency based on average internal item correlations. In this research, reliability analysis with Chronbach’s alpha model was conducted for 40 scale items—social media usage, political engagement, political awareness, social media activism, and political participation (see item descriptions in Appendix A, Section V). As Table 1 shows, the overall reliability of these items as measured by Chronbach’s alpha is 0.895. In order to ascertain the internal consistency among these scale items, additional Chronbach’s alpha “If Item Deleted” statistics were obtained. As indicated, in the last column of the table, these efficiencies were fairly consistent with variations between .789 and .801. Therefore, it is determined that the scale items were uniformly consistent with a high level of reliability.
Table 1. Reliability analysis items - total statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Social Media Usage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use Facebook</td>
<td>79.1034</td>
<td>248.350</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use Instagram</td>
<td>79.6322</td>
<td>239.189</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use Twitter</td>
<td>80.4023</td>
<td>238.290</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use Snapchat</td>
<td>80.2874</td>
<td>252.835</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use Google Plus</td>
<td>81.7241</td>
<td>253.156</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use YouTube</td>
<td>79.0575</td>
<td>254.752</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering your most frequently used social media site, how many contacts/friends/followers do you have</td>
<td>79.8506</td>
<td>249.501</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where would you place yourself on the Political Leaning Scale ranging from 1 (Radical) to 10 (Ultra Conservative)</td>
<td>79.7011</td>
<td>276.631</td>
<td>-.158</td>
<td>.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you Registered to Vote?</td>
<td>83.3103</td>
<td>266.914</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you vote in the last Presidential election</td>
<td>83.4828</td>
<td>263.229</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years, did you attend any campaign events?</td>
<td>83.3908</td>
<td>268.427</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years, did you follow any legislation related to criminal justice reform</td>
<td>83.3908</td>
<td>268.427</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years did you communicate with elected officials regarding police and community relation issues</td>
<td>82.9425</td>
<td>269.194</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.796</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you talk politics among my family and friends</td>
<td>80.0115</td>
<td>261.825</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you talk about the candidate’s platform among my family and friends</td>
<td>80.3678</td>
<td>260.631</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you read about politics in the newspaper or magazines</td>
<td>80.3908</td>
<td>258.776</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you watched discussions about politics on TV</td>
<td>80.3448</td>
<td>254.298</td>
<td>.432</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you read about politics in the newspaper or magazines</td>
<td>80.3908</td>
<td>258.776</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you watched discussions about politics on TV</td>
<td>80.3448</td>
<td>254.298</td>
<td>.432</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you listen to discussions about politics on the radio</td>
<td>80.6092</td>
<td>264.473</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do you check social media for news about politics</td>
<td>80.2989</td>
<td>244.468</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>.775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Political Awareness**

<table>
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<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years, how frequent did you follow elected officials, candidates for office or other political figures</td>
<td>80.9425</td>
<td>243.032</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>.774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years how frequent did you in post your own thoughts or comments on political issues</td>
<td>80.8966</td>
<td>236.466</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years how frequent did you encourage other people to take action on a political issue</td>
<td>80.6092</td>
<td>237.055</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years how frequent did you in learned about political causes</td>
<td>80.3448</td>
<td>244.670</td>
<td>.623</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</td>
<td>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</td>
<td>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</td>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for expressing your opinions on political issues</td>
<td>83.2989</td>
<td>261.352</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for expression you opinions on Police brutality and misconduct</td>
<td>83.1954</td>
<td>262.810</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for expression you opinions on community organizing efforts such as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement initiatives</td>
<td>83.3793</td>
<td>259.354</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism by posting links to political issues that others have posted</td>
<td>83.3563</td>
<td>261.186</td>
<td>.576</td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism clicking “Like” or promoting material related to political issues that others have posted</td>
<td>83.1494</td>
<td>265.780</td>
<td>.398</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism by posting video giving your own thoughts on political issues</td>
<td>83.6322</td>
<td>262.840</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism by joining political, public or citizen-led causes on social network sites in the last 3 years related to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>83.4253</td>
<td>261.526</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>.787</td>
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Table 1 (continued)

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<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism by joining groups or pages such as Facebook related to the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>83.5402</td>
<td>259.972</td>
<td>.617</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism by creating social media pages or groups related to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>83.6092</td>
<td>262.334</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you used social media sites for political activism by reposting content related to police killing incidences</td>
<td>83.1954</td>
<td>264.182</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended public demonstrations, protests, rallies, etc.</td>
<td>83.3563</td>
<td>264.255</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you engaged in the following activities in response to the incidences of police brutality by attending political forums</td>
<td>83.4483</td>
<td>266.855</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you engaged in the following activities in response to the incidences of police brutality signing a petition to authorities</td>
<td>83.3563</td>
<td>265.813</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you engaged in the following activities in response to the incidences of police brutality participating in meetings with authorities</td>
<td>83.5747</td>
<td>267.643</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you engaged in the following activities in</td>
<td>83.8046</td>
<td>264.159</td>
<td>.437</td>
<td>.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>response to the incidences of police brutality sending letter(s) to the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the last 3 years have you engaged in the following activities in</td>
<td>83.6552</td>
<td>267.391</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>response to the incidences of police brutality organizing or helping to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organize a protest, demonstration, rally, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement demonstrations,</td>
<td>81.0345</td>
<td>260.848</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protests, rallies or town hall meetings have you participated in within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the last 3 years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treatment of the Data

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The treatment of data employed descriptive statistics that included measurements of frequency distribution, standard deviation, and cross tabulations to explain the data.

The test static used for this study were a series of regressions along the conceptual model.

The data collected through the instrument discussed above provide information on different measurements: nominal, ordinal, and interval. This information was treated as per the norms of statistical principals with regard to their measurement characteristics for conducting appropriate statistical techniques that would yield meaningful interpretations.
Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to African Americans who have participated in at least one social justice movement protest while residing in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. As such, the participants do not reflect the entire population of demonstrators and protestors in the state of Georgia. Thus, the results must be interpreted to the population that is in close approximation of the study sample.

A second limitation is characteristic of any self-administered data approach. The degree of validity and reliability of this data depends on the accuracy of the respondent’s willingness and ability to provide responses. This research attempted to minimize this error to the extent possible by conducting a series of focus groups, comparing initial findings with their electronic submissions, and then checking for internal consistency.

A third limitation is the population was selected from individuals associated with organizations that tend to have a social justice agenda. These organizations do not necessarily reflect all organizations with concerns related to Black Lives Matter issues. A fourth limitation is the data collected from the small sample limit the generalizability to the larger population.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the study in order to describe and explain the degree of influence social media usage factors has on protestor participation. The data analysis was conducted at two levels: (1) demographic data and (2) research questions. The first level was the descriptive analysis, which provides a demographic and socioeconomic profile of protest participants including variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and religious affiliation. In addition, socioeconomic demographics also provide participant data including zip code, community setting, occupation, employment status, income range and educational levels.

The second level of analysis was the analytical procedures, which included a series of regressions equations guided by the conceptual model presented in Chapter III, to determine the significance of variables that had direct and indirect impact on respondent’s level of protest participation online and offline.

Descriptive Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Protest Participants

A significant percentage of participants were female (64%) compared to males (35%). Participants’ age (43%) fell within 18-23 group and the 41+ group (33%). Overall, these ages were fairly distributed among all age categories. The ethnicity of the
population was as expected with 110 (92%) indicating African American. Interestingly, 8
(7%) reported in the category of “Other” while 1 (.8%) reported white and Hispanic,
respectively. Sixty percent (n = 71) of respondents reported being single, followed by
those reporting to be married (25%) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic profile of protest participants (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your Gender? (n = 120)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group (n = 120)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41+</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your ethnicity (n = 120)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Your Marital Status? (n = 120)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Law (Living Together)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is your religious affiliation? (n = 120)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>65.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ifa (Yoruba)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemetic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vodun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
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<td>.9</td>
<td>72.6</td>
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<td>Higher Power</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How would you describe your community? (n = 120)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>94.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many years of schooling have you completed? (n = 120)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School (K-6th)</td>
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<td>.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary (7th-12th)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate (13-14 yrs)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Valid Percent</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your religious affiliation? (n = 120)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (13-16 yrs)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters (17-18 yrs)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral (19-22 yrs)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third largest group of respondents reported being divorced (12%) while 2% reported either living together in common law or being separated, respectively.

Regarding religious affiliation, 30% reported being Baptist, 19% non-denominational, 14% Other, and nearly 13% associated with a Higher Power. The latest national survey determined 70.6% of Americans are Christians, though 22.8% are non-Christians. In comparison, the participants of this study showed an interesting religious affiliation of 60.7% who identified as Christian and 39.5% identified as non-Christian.

Identifying participants by those who reside within metro Atlanta compared to those living outside metro Atlanta proved to be quite difficult as zip codes overlap in many communities, such as Alpharetta/Milton/Johns Creek. Similar challenges were met with trying to focus on the targeted counties such as Fulton, Cobb, Clayton, Gwinnett, and Dekalb. Many of the numbers overlap based on the specific city within a county for which the participant resides. In the neighborhoods closer to Downtown, there were two to four communities in one zip code. Nonetheless, zip codes were partitioned by those in the general range of metro Atlanta and those zip codes below and above the targeted range. As indicated, most of the 120 participants reported living within metro Atlanta 76
(67%), followed by those residing above the targeted zip code (21%) and those below the targeted zip code (12%). By identifying the type of community the participants said they were from, respondents closely showed an even distribution of percentages among those from urban 58 (48.7%) and suburban areas 54 (45.4%). In addition, the data showed most of the participants 73 (63.5%) had a minimum college degree whereas 42 (36.5%) had a high school diploma or less.

**Characteristics of Overall Social Media Use**

Table 3 describes the frequency protest participants use the various social media networks between Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, GooglePlus, and Youtube. From national surveys, Facebook continues to be the most largely used social media site. The national average of social media users showed 62% of Americans used Facebook with 70% of users indicating they log on daily. In comparison, 85.8% of participants in this study used Facebook at least once a month with more than half or 67 (55.8%) logging into Facebook at least once a day. Through further review, daily login on social media sites was a good indicator of frequency and use. Therefore, nearly half or 45% of the participants frequently used Instagram at least once a day. Similarly, Twitter was used by less than one-third or 31.7% of the respondents at least once a day. Among Instagram users, 42.1% of the participants used this social media site at least once a day. GooglePlus was the most infrequently used social media site within this study with only 16.7% of the participants logging in at least once a day. Lastly, Youtube was comparable to most others with 45% of the participants logging in at least once a day.
Table 3. Characteristics of overall social media use (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>2-3 times a month</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>At least 3 times a week</th>
<th>Every day, once a day</th>
<th>Every day, more than once a day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. How often do you use Facebook?</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.2%)</td>
<td>(8.3%)</td>
<td>(5.8%)</td>
<td>(4.2%)</td>
<td>(11.2%)</td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
<td>(43.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How often do you use Instagram?</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(14.2%)</td>
<td>(8.3%)</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
<td>(5.8%)</td>
<td>(10.0%)</td>
<td>(35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How often do you use Twitter?</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(43.5%)</td>
<td>(10.0%)</td>
<td>(3.3%)</td>
<td>(7.5%)</td>
<td>(5.0%)</td>
<td>(5.0%)</td>
<td>(26.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How often do you use Snapchat?</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(48.7%)</td>
<td>(5.0%)</td>
<td>(1.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
<td>(7.6%)</td>
<td>(34.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How often do you use Google Plus?</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(55.8%)</td>
<td>(10.0%)</td>
<td>(6.7%)</td>
<td>(6.7%)</td>
<td>(4.2%)</td>
<td>(4.2%)</td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How often do you use Youtube?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.3%)</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
<td>(14.2%)</td>
<td>(9.2%)</td>
<td>(25.8%)</td>
<td>(16.7%)</td>
<td>(28.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Media Friends and Followers

Table 4 describes the number of social media users who have connections with other people within their social network who are either online friends or followers. Thus, 6.8% of the participants acknowledged that they had fewer than 10 friends on their most frequently used social media site while 3.4% participants had 10-50 friends or followers. Further, 6.8% of the participants had 51-100 friends or followers while 20.5% of the participants had 101-499 friends or followers; reporting with the highest number of friends or followers, 62.4% of the participants reported having 500 or more connections on the social media site most frequently used.
Table 4. Social media friends and followers \((N = 120)\)

18. Considering your most frequently used social media site, how many contacts/friends/followers do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 10</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-50</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-499</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or more</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Characteristics of Political Leanings**

Table 5 describes characteristics of formal political leanings that included participants selecting along the political spectrum being radical, liberal, conservative, or ultra conservative. A total of 18.2% of the participants’ indicated “radical” as their political leaning.

Table 5. Characteristics of political leanings \((N =120)\)

19. Nowadays when we speak of political leanings, we talk of liberals and conservatives. Here there is a 1-10 scale that goes from radical to ultra conservative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radical</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To add, 30.9% of the participants acknowledged politically leaning left as liberal. Equally, 34.6% of the participants selected mid-range as moderates. Lastly 16.4% of the participants’ political leanings were on the right as conservative. None of the participants selected ultra conservative among the various choices.

**Characteristics of Political Engagement**

Table 6 describes characteristics of formal political engagement that include participants registering to vote, voting in a presidential election, attending campaign events, following legislation, and communicating with elected officials. Among the initial characteristics of political engagement 84.7% of the participants say they are registered to vote along with 73.9% saying they voted in the last Presidential election of 2016 between the top candidates of the Republican and Democratic parties, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, respectively. Though only a little more than half or 53.8% of the participants attended campaign events, just less than two-thirds or 62.2% of the participants followed legislation related to criminal justice reform.

**Table 6. Characteristics of political engagement (N = 120)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Registered to vote</td>
<td>18(15.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Voted in the last Presidential election</td>
<td>31(26.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Attend any campaign events</td>
<td>55(46.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Follow any legislation related to criminal justice reform</td>
<td>45(37.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Communication with elected officials regarding police and community relation issues</td>
<td>58(49.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Talked politics among my family and friends</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.7%)</td>
<td>(3.4%)</td>
<td>(23.5%)</td>
<td>(39.5%)</td>
<td>(31.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Talked about the candidate’s platform among my family and friends</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.1%)</td>
<td>(8.5%)</td>
<td>(28.8%)</td>
<td>(39.8%)</td>
<td>(17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Read about politics in the newspaper or magazines</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(9.2%)</td>
<td>(8.4%)</td>
<td>(24.4%)</td>
<td>(32.8%)</td>
<td>(25.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Watched discussions about politics on TV</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3.4%)</td>
<td>(10.1%)</td>
<td>(35.3%)</td>
<td>(23.5%)</td>
<td>(27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Listened to discussions about politics on the radio</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(3.4%)</td>
<td>(17.2%)</td>
<td>(35.3%)</td>
<td>(24.1%)</td>
<td>(19.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Checked social media for news about politics</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(9.4%)</td>
<td>(6.0%)</td>
<td>(24.8%)</td>
<td>(24.8%)</td>
<td>(35.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With topics related to how frequent the participants discussed, read, and checked social media about political matters, over half or 57.6% of the participants frequently discussed politics with family/friends, 58.0% of participants read about politics in newspapers, and 59.8% of participants checked social media for news about politics. Consequently, there was significantly less frequency among one-fifth or 19.8% of the participant population who listened to discussions about politics on the radio.

**Characteristics of Political Awareness**

Generally, nearly two-thirds or 62.2% of the respondents in this study used social media to learn about political causes while a little over half or 55.9% of the respondents
encouraged other people to take action on political issues using social media as the vehicle of communication. Table 7 describes characteristics of political awareness by assessing the level of frequency respondents used social media to engage in political matters from general political issues to specific political issues.

Table 7. Characteristics of political awareness frequency (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Followed elected officials, candidates for office or other political figures</td>
<td>17 (14.5%)</td>
<td>19 (16.2%)</td>
<td>35 (29.9%)</td>
<td>32 (27.4%)</td>
<td>14 (12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted your own thoughts or comments on political issues</td>
<td>16 (13.7%)</td>
<td>22 (18.8%)</td>
<td>33 (28.2%)</td>
<td>21 (17.9%)</td>
<td>25 (21.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged other people to take action on a political issue</td>
<td>15 (12.7%)</td>
<td>16 (13.6%)</td>
<td>21 (17.8%)</td>
<td>36 (30.5%)</td>
<td>30 (25.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned about political causes</td>
<td>11 (9.6%)</td>
<td>8 (7.0%)</td>
<td>24 (21.1%)</td>
<td>38 (33.3%)</td>
<td>33 (28.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did not</th>
<th>Yes I did</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political issues</td>
<td>29 (24.4%)</td>
<td>90 (75.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police brutality and misconduct along with related community outrage</td>
<td>18 (15.4%)</td>
<td>99 (84.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community organizing efforts such as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement initiatives</td>
<td>39 (32.8%)</td>
<td>80 (67.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, 75.6% of the respondents used social media to express opinions on political matters as a whole. On matters specific to the Black Lives Matter Social Justice
Movement, respondents expressed high levels of social media use with 84.6% of the respondents expressing their opinions on police brutality. Lastly, slightly over two-thirds or 67.2% of the respondents used social media to share community organizing efforts on Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement initiatives.

**Characteristics of Social Media Activism**

Table 8 describes the functional use of social media toward political activism. Social media activism or online political participation was over two-thirds or 66.1% of the respondents had posted links to political stories or articles for others to read. Consequently, 86.4% of respondents had a high degree of actively clicking “Like” promoting material related to political issues that others had posted. On the other hand, a disparity was shown whereby less than half (45.8%) of the respondents posted videos giving their own thoughts on political issues lacking compared to other social media activist behavior.

In the areas of Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement, 61.0% of the respondents joined groups or pages on social media sites, 50.0% of respondents joined subject matter groups on social media, and 42.9% of respondents created subject matter social media pages or groups. Similarly to the high degree of respondents clicking “Like,” 82.2% of the respondents were also very active in reposting content related to police killing incidences.
Table 8. Characteristics of social media activism (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Posting links to political stories or articles for others to read</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(33.9%)</td>
<td>(66.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Clicking “Like” or promoting material related to political issues that others have posted</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(13.6%)</td>
<td>(86.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Posting video giving your own thoughts on political issues</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(54.2%)</td>
<td>(45.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Joining political, public or citizen-led causes on social network sites in the last 3 years related to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(39.0%)</td>
<td>(61.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Joining groups or pages such as Facebook related to the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(50.0%)</td>
<td>(50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Creating social media pages or groups related to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(57.1%)</td>
<td>(42.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Reposting content related to police killing incidences</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(17.8%)</td>
<td>(82.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Characteristics of Political Participation**

Table 9 describes political participation among respondents who have engaged in political actions including the attendance of demonstrations, protests, political forums, signing petitions to be given to authorities, or those who have engaged in organizing demonstrations.
Table 9. Characteristics of political participation (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did not engage</th>
<th>Did engage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45. Attended public demonstrations, protests, rallies, etc.</td>
<td>40 (33.9%)</td>
<td>78 (66.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Attended political forums</td>
<td>52 (43.7%)</td>
<td>67 (56.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Signed a petition to authorities</td>
<td>43 (36.1%)</td>
<td>76 (63.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Participated in meetings with authorities</td>
<td>63 (53.8%)</td>
<td>54 (46.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Sent letter(s) to the media</td>
<td>91 (77.8%)</td>
<td>26 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Organized or helped to organize a protest, demonstration, rally, etc.</td>
<td>73 (61.3%)</td>
<td>46 (38.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked whether respondents engaged in attending demonstrations, protests, or rallies, two-thirds or 66.1% of the respondents said they had engaged in these types of political activities. Nearly two-thirds or 63.9% of respondents had also signed petitions, electronic or paper, to be given to political authorities.

In the area of sending letters to the media, a lower percentage of respondents did not engage in this activity at a 77.8% of non-participation. When asked whether respondents had organized or helped to organize a protest, demonstration, or rally, more than one-third or 38.7% of the respondents indicated they had engaged in such an organizing action within the last three years.
Characteristics of Protest Participation

Table 10 demonstrates actual offline or physical protest participation among respondent’s total number of times they have attended Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement demonstrations, protests, rallies or town hall meetings. Of those respondents who did not attend any of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, 22.2% of the respondents had not attended any of the demonstrations, protests, rallies or town hall meetings within the last three years.

Table 10. Characteristics of protest participation (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on this survey question two, 28.2% of the respondents acknowledged participation in at least one or two demonstrations, protests, rallies, or town hall meetings within the last three years. On the other hand, 83.5% of the respondents indicated they had attended at least one or more within the last three years. In other groupings, respondents acknowledged three or four demonstration among 13.7% of this population.
Uniquely, a significant difference was indicated in those attending Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement having a high degree of engagement with nearly one out of four respondents, 23.9%, showing participation in seven or more of these protest-oriented gatherings. Yet, 9.4% of the respondents have attended 11 or more of protests.

Analytical Procedures

In an effort to answer the research questions presented in Chapter I, several regression models were tested along the conceptual model discussed in Chapter II and results are presented in this section. The research question and corresponding hypothesis precede each analysis to aid in following the conceptual model.

Impact of Political Awareness on Social Media Usage

RQ1: To what degree does the level of political awareness influence social media?

Ho1: There is no statistical significant relationship between level of political awareness and social media among protest participants.

Table 11 shows participants’ level of political awareness account for 15.7% of the variance in social media usage. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict a participant’s social media use based on the level of political awareness. A significant regression equation was found: (F(1,104)=1,110,111, p<20,518) with an R² of .157. Protest participants predicted social media usage was equal to political awareness (14.737 + .614), that is, as the frequency of political awareness increases so does the variance in social media usage. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.
Table 11. Results of regression on social media usage by level of political awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>̂a</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>̂β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>14.737</td>
<td>2.196</td>
<td>6.711</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>4.530</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F(1,104)=1,110,111, p<.000) with an R² of .157

Impact of Political Awareness on Political Engagement

RQ2: To what degree does political awareness influence political engagement among protest participants?

Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between political awareness and political engagement among protest participants.

Table 12 shows that the level of political awareness explains 36% of the variance in political engagement. A significant regression equation was found: (F(1,106,107)=59.999, p<.001) with an R² of .361. Protest participants predicted political engagement was equal to political awareness (15.953 + .624). The greater the degree of political awareness resulted in an increase in their level of political engagement. Thus, political awareness was twice as influential on political engagement compared to social media usage. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 12. Results of regression on political engagement by level of political awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>̂a</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>̂β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>15.953</td>
<td>1.304</td>
<td>12.229</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.601</td>
<td>7.746</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F(1,106,107)=59.999, p<.001) with an R² of .361
Impact of Political Awareness on Social Media Activism

RQ3: To what degree does political awareness influence social media activism among protest participants?

Ho3: There is no statistical significant relationship between political awareness and social media activism among protest participants?

Political awareness accounted for 55% of the variance in social media activism. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ social media activism based on their level of political awareness. A significant regression equation was found: (F(1,104)=127.716, p<.001) with an R² of .551. Protest participants predicted social media activism was equal to political awareness (-.510 + .309). The more protest participants used social media to engage in online political matters and express their opinions about political issues, the more likely protest participants increased their frequency of posting, reposting, and joining subject-matter groups, which is characteristic of social media activism. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, Political Awareness appeared to be most influential on social media activism compared to their level of political engagement and social media usage (see Table 13).

Table 13. Results of regression on social media activism by level of political awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(\hat{\beta})</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>(\hat{\beta})</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-.510</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>-1.151</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>11.301</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F(1,104,105)=127.716, p<.001) with an R² of .551
Impact of Social Media Usage on Political Engagement

RQ4: To what degree does social media usage influence political engagement among protest participants?

Ho4: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and political engagement among protest participants?

Social media usage accounted for only .3% of the variance in political engagement. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ political awareness based on their level of social media usage. The regression equation was found not significant: (F(1,110,111)=.298, p<.001) with an R² of .003; that is, there was no significant statistical relationship between social media usage and political engagement and the null hypothesis was accepted (see Table 14).

Table 14. Results of regression on political engagement by level of social media usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>26.581</td>
<td>1.634</td>
<td>16.271</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>-.546</td>
<td>.586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F(1,110,111)=.298, p<.001) with an R² of .003

Impact of Social Media Usage on Social Media Activism

RQ5: To what degree does social media usage influence political activism engagement among protest participants?

Ho5: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and political activism engagement among protest participants?
As shown in Table 15, social media usage accounted for 9.4% of the variance in social media activism. A weak significant regression equation was found:

\( F(1,110,111)=11.433, p<.001 \) with an \( R^2 \) of .094. Protest participants predicted social media activism was equal to social media usage \((2.288 + .083)\). Protest participants’ use of social media appears to have some influence on their level of political engagement; however, it was evident that other factors may have contributed to their engagement. Nonetheless, the null hypothesis was rejected as a relationship was found to exist.

### Table 15. Results of regression on social media activism by level of social media usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( \hat{\beta} )</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>( \hat{\beta} )</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.288</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>3.699</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>3.381</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( F(1,110,111)=11.433, p<.001 \) with an \( R^2 \) of .094

### Impact of Social Media Usage on Protest Participation

RQ6: To what degree does social media usage influence protest participation among participants?

Ho6: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and protest participation among participants?

Social media usage accounted for only 1.9% of the variance in protest participation. This weak association was not found to be statistically significant. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ level of protest participation based on their level of social media usage: \( F(1,112,113)=2.146, p<.001 \)
with an $R^2$ of .019. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted since no statistically significant relationship was found to exist (see Table 16).

Table 16. Results of regression on protest participation by level of social media usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\hat{a}$</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>$\hat{a}$</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.769</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>6.202</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td>1.465</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($F(1,112,113)=2.146$, $p<.001$) with an $R^2$ of .019

Impact of Social Media Activism on Protest Participation

RQ7: To what degree does social media activism influence protest participation among protest participants?

Ho7: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media activism and protest participation among protest participants?

As shown in Table 17, protest participation accounted for 24% of the variance in social media activism. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ protest participation based on their level of social media activism. A significant regression equation was found: ($F(1,108,109)=34.123$, $p<.001$) with an $R^2$ of .240.

Protest participants predicted political participation was equal to social media activism ($.934 + .455$), and thus rejected the null hypothesis.

Table 17. Results of regression on protest participation by level of social media activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\hat{a}$</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>$\hat{a}$</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.934</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>2.508</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Activism</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>5.841</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($F(1,108,109)=34.123$, $p<.001$) with an $R^2$ of .240
Impact of Political Participation on Political Engagement

RQ8: To what degree does political engagement influence protest participation among protest participants?

Ho8: There is no statistical significant relationship between political engagement and protest participation among protest participants?

As shown in Table 18, political participation accounted for 32% of the variance in political engagement. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict participants’ political participation based on the level of political engagement. A significant regression equation was found: (F=1,107,108) =50.943, p<.001) with an R² of .323. Protest participants predicted political participation was equal to political engagement (-2.694 + .219). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 18. Results of regression on protest participation by level of political engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( \hat{\beta} )</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>( \hat{\beta} )</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-2.694</td>
<td>.810</td>
<td>-3.324</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Engagement</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td>7.137</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F=1,107,108)=50.943, p<.001) with an R² of .323

Regression on Protest Participation by Elements of Political Involvement

In an effort to test the overall model fit, a Multiple Linear Regression was calculated to predict participant’s level of protest participation based on their combined levels of social media usage, political engagement, political awareness, social media activism, political leaning, and age. These variables combined accounted for 50% of the variance in protest participation (see Table 19).
Table 19. Regression on protest participation by elements of political involvement: political awareness, political engagement, social media activism, and political participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.214</td>
<td>1.683</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage Score</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.293</td>
<td>-2.197</td>
<td>.031*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Engagement Score</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td>3.089</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness Score</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Activism Score</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>1.967</td>
<td>.053*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Leaning from 1 (Radical) to 10 (Ultra Conservative)</td>
<td>-.240</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>-.222</td>
<td>-2.416</td>
<td>.018*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your age</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>-1.917</td>
<td>.362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F(6,77,83)=12.560, p<.001) with an R² of .495.

A significant regression equation was found: (F(6,77,83)=12.560, p<.001) with an R² of .495. Protest participants predicted political participation was equal to protest participation (-.078 + .140 + .029 + .248 + -.240 + .019 + .455). Significant statistical predictors were found specifically among social media usage (.03*), political engagement (.003), and political leanings (.018*). Although political awareness was the greatest influence on social media activism, when combined with other variables, this factor became non-significant.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explain whether social media use influences the elements of political involvement such as political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism) and political participation toward individual protest participation among African Americans living in Atlanta, GA. An explanatory research design was employed in this study.

A total of 120 protest participants were randomly selected as volunteer participants from social justice organizations, organizations with social justice agendas, and institutions with a high likelihood of African-American protestors within the Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia area. A self-administered survey was constructed by this researcher in consultation with research advisors. Data analysis was conducted at two levels: descriptive, which employed frequency and percent distributions of participant responses and analytical procedures, which included a series of regression equations guided by the conceptual model.

Summary and conclusions of the research finding are presented in this chapter. Additionally, recommendations for future research directions and implications of the study are presented.
The research study was designed to answer one central question followed by eight sub-questions concerning social media influence on the elements of political involvement toward individual protest participation:

RQ1: To what degree does the level of political awareness influence social media?

RQ2: To what degree does political awareness influence political engagement among protest participants?

RQ3: To what degree does political awareness influence social media activism among protest participants?

RQ4: To what degree does social media usage influence political engagement among protest participants?

RQ5: To what degree does social media usage influence political activism engagement among protest participants?

RQ6: To what degree does social media usage influence protest participation among participants?

RQ7: To what degree does social media activism influence protest participation among protest participants?

RQ8: To what degree does political engagement influence protest participation among protest participants?

The null hypotheses for this study were as follows:

Ho1: There is no statistical significant relationship between level of political awareness and social media among protest participants.
Ho2: There is no statistical significant relationship between political awareness and political engagement among protest participants.

Ho3: There is no statistical significant relationship between political awareness and social media activism among protest participants?

Ho4: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and political engagement among protest participants?

Ho5: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and political activism engagement among protest participants?

Ho6: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media usage and protest participation among participants?

Ho7: There is no statistical significant relationship between social media activism and protest participation among protest participants?

Ho8: There is no statistical significant relationship between political engagement and protest participation among protest participants?

Some of the major findings revealed social media use does have some influences upon elements of political involvement such as political engagement, political awareness, political activism (social media activism), and political participation toward individual protest participation.

Among the participants in this study, Facebook was used more than any other social media platform when compared to Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, GooglePlus, and YouTube. Consequently, 55.8% of the participants log on to Facebook at least once a day. As a baseline of protest participant social media use, Instagram and YouTube
equally ranked second with 54% of the participants logging in at least once a day. Also, Snapchat followed with 50% of participants logging into the platform at least once a day whereas protest participants were less likely to use Twitter (38%) or GooglePlus (16.7%). In addition, 62.4% of the protest participants in this study had 500 or more contacts, friends, or followers within their most frequently used social media platform. Therefore, social media usage among most protest participants could be considered moderate to moderately high. Moreover, many of the protest participants had a high number of people they can reach providing digital content within their own social network.

Political awareness is one of the elements of political involvement and relates to individuals gaining insight on matters such as political issues, learning about political issues, and/or sharing information on political issues. While taking social media usage and political awareness into consideration, protest participants showed a low statistical significance at a variance of 15.7%, yet was significant nonetheless. This indicated as the frequency of political awareness increases, so does the variance in social media usage. This was indicative of behavior describing 84.6% of the protest participants engaged in a high level of social media use when expressing their opinions on police brutality. In general, a high level of protest participants, 75.6%, expressed their opinion on political matters as a whole. Similarly, 62.2% of protest participants used social media to learn about political causes. This suggests that the protest participants in this study, while moderately using social media for general use, were much more likely to use social media to express, learn, and share their opinions on matters they care about the most.
Thus, this African-American population has used social media as a tool to increase their political awareness, especially on subject matter such as police brutality.

Political engagement is another element of political involvement civically exercising the practices of traditional political participation. Among this population, 84% of the participants were registered to vote while 73.9% voted in the 2016 Presidential election between democrat candidate Hillary Clinton and republican candidate Donald Trump. With 62.2% of this population following legislation related to criminal justice reform, the political engagement among these protest participants could be considered moderate to moderately high.

In relation to another political element, political awareness influenced political engagement among protest participants at a variance of 36%. Although this can be considered moderately low, political awareness and political engagement indicate a statistical significance. This means the greater degree of political awareness among protest participants results in an increase in their level of political engagement. Thus, political awareness was twice as influential on political engagement compared to social media usage.

When relying only on social media usage as the singular influencer, social media use would not be a strong predictor of protest participation. However, using social media for more specific tasks associated with political activism or social media activism, a stronger prediction towards protest participation can be determined.

Most of the participants in this study were highly engaged in online behavior associated with the political element of social media activism. Social media activists are
individuals who engage in online behavior consistent with characteristics of political awareness. In matters of politics, these activists engage sharing opinions, posts, reposts, articles, commenting on posts, creating politically oriented social media pages, and joining politically oriented social media pages. Among this population of protest participants, 86.4% engaged in clicking “Like” or promoting material related to political issues that others have posted. Moreover, 82.2% reposted content related to police killing incidences, while 66.1% post links to political stories or articles for others to read. On further, 50% joined groups inside social media platforms related to the Black Lives Matter Movement. Lastly, 42.9% created the social media pages related to Black Lives Matter Movement. Consequently, participant online behavior gives more insight into what drives individual interests related to social and political matters. Particularly, social media activism had a stronger prediction towards protest participation when tied to issues the participant care about. This study has shown that most of the participants care about the Black Lives Matter Movement and cares about the issue of police killings of black citizens.

When social media activism is influenced by political awareness, political awareness accounts for 55% of the variance. Therefore, there is a strong significant statistically relationship between political awareness and social media activism. The more protest participants use social media to engage in online political matters and express their opinions about political issues, highly suggests the more likely protest participants will increase their frequency of online behavior. This means engaging in clicks, posts, reposts, sharing, commenting, joining groups and creating groups. Hence,
political awareness appears to be more influential on social media activism compared to the levels determined by political engagement and social media usage.

Essentially, this study sought to centrally understand the relationship between social media and protest participation. In the matter of participants attending public demonstrations, protests, and/or rallies, 66.1% of the participants said they had engaged in these types of events. Also, 63.9% of this population has signed petitions. However, there are other signs of active protest participation beyond attendance or signing petitions to show support. To analyze deeper into active engagement of protest participation, 38.7% of the participants organized or helped organize a protest, demonstration or rally compared to only attending. Specifically, in the case of the Black Lives Matter Movement protest events in the last three years, 83.5% of the participants indicated they had attended at least one or more protest events. Even further, 23.9% of the participants had engaged in at least 7 or above in Black Lives Matter Movement protest events within the last three years.

Through further analysis, social media usage accounted for only 1.9% of the variance in protest participation. This weak association was not found to be statistically significant. However, protest participation accounted for 24% of the variance in social media activism. Thus, the greater the degree of protest participation resulted in slightly less than one-quarter of the population increased in their level of social media activism. When analyzing the overall model to predict participants’ level of protest participation, there were four significant statistical predictors. By combining the levels of social media usage, political engagement, political awareness, social media activism, political leaning
and age, the data found social media usage, political engagement, social media activism, and political leanings were the significant statistical variables towards protest participation. Therefore, based on this study, statistically, the profile of a protest participant living in Atlanta, Georgia can be seen as an African-American individual who logs onto Facebook once or more a day, a registered voter, clicks “Like” and reposts Black Lives Matter Movement information, joins or creates Black Lives Matter groups online, is a Radical, and has attended more than one Black Lives Matter protest event.

In summary, traditional political participation behavior is still the strongest indicators of whether an individual will engage in protest behavior. However, social media is finding some levels of influence when integrating traditional elements of political involvement with social media activism. The study reinforces previous research that online political behavior offers new significance to understanding collective action among African Americans. While the use of traditional media is showing definite signs of decreased usage, social media networks are showing signs of increased usage. Seemingly, the internet and social media have offered a revival in the legacy of social movement among African Americans with new speed of information, range of communications, and organizational capacity unlike previous generations. However, the research suggests that social media’s impact is more focused in political awareness aligning to an even stronger influence based on the legacy and tradition of protest among African Americans in America. Technology, while significant, is only a tool relevant to the time that is integrated in an established tradition embedded in the elements of political involvement toward rights, liberation and sovereignty. Proportionately, traditional
technologies of printing, postal services, the telephone, handbills, and word-of-mouth have all had a convergence into single technology driven from the microprocessor and personal computer device to the mobile phone. The internet, the mobile phone, and social media have had a definite role in shaping black narratives of incidences and the aftermath of protest.

Therefore, social media has been a major contributor within political awareness especially in the cases of witnessing incidences after the fact through mobile phone or video such as Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida in 2012; Michael Brown in Ferguson, MI in 2014; Freddie Gray in Baltimore, MD in 2015; and Sandra Bland in Waller County, TX in 2015. Similarly, other examples of incidences directly witnessed using the mobile phone, uploaded and shared on social media have been the cases of Eric Garner in New York, NY in 2014; Walter Scott in Charleston, SC in 2015; Philando Castille, Minneapolis, MN in 2016; Terrence Crutcher of Tulsa, OK in 2016; and Keith Lamont Scott in Charlotte SC in 2016.

In each of these cases, social media activism has been a major indicator in political awareness. In the continuity of the tradition of black movement in America, the Black Lives Matter Movement continues to evolve digitally documenting and driving social narrative through the use and strategic activism combined with an expanded tradition of political participation.
Implications for Future Research Direction

While every effort was made to consider the complexities of involvement, there remain relevant implications for future research direction. The following recommendations are presented:

1. While detailed data were obtained regarding the individual protest participants and elements of political involvement, additional research should explore what specific organizations do the respondents belong to.

2. The focus of this study involved ascertaining the role of social media use to influence individual protest participation in the Black Lives Matter Movement. Further studies should investigate data coming directly from social media platforms like Twitter analytics. Including analytics of other social media sites would be beneficial. This would further clarify the influence of social media use versus social media activism.

3. While institutional factors considered their political leanings and number of contacts, friends or followers, future studies should focus on other political associations and involvement with elections. This would take into account histories of political party affiliation.

4. A more robust mixed methodology would be beneficial for this research. Qualitative questions, open ended questions, would provide additional insight into understanding the behavior of protest participants.

5. While providing additional opportunities to individuals or participants to complete the survey, administering the survey instrument in meetings or
classes served to be more beneficial. It is recommended to add additional sites where organizations regularly meet to obtain more instrument participation.

6. Around survey instrument questions, an additional question for future research would include a question or questions on what is social media used for most frequently. For example, entertainment or socializing, etc.

7. In the area of analysis, future analysis could include more cross tabulation. Although some cross tabulation was analyzed, implication for future analysis is strongly recommended.

8. Future research should also consider obtaining direct input from social justice organization representatives, political officials, and technology organizations.

Implications for the Political Scientist, Researcher, and Political Activist

Efforts to better understand elements of political involvement require investigations beyond singular dimensions. This study has shown that multiple factors including personal characteristics, social media usage, political awareness, political engagement, and social media activism significantly affect a protest participant’s level of participation attending Black Lives Matter Movement protests. Implications of these finding for the political scientist are relevant across areas of specializations.

For researchers, it requires understanding the multiplicity of political involvement. Involvement does not imply registered to vote “only.” Implications suggest an opportunity, from theoretical perspective, to better understand presenting problems relevant to the time. Thus, the relationships between emerging technologies
such as social media, social justice movement and mass protest among African Americans are impacted politically, socially and institutionally. Additionally, considering the historical relationship African Americans have interacted with individuals in institutions within the American government, researching the political and social impact of emerging technologies will add clarity regarding effective predictions of future protests and movements. For political scientists and researchers, it provides a basis for additional strategies for effective predictive methods promoting effective African-American involvement in the political system. The collaboration among local organizations was found to be beneficial for organizing individuals towards protests.

Implications of this study towards political activism suggest the existence of traditional models remain a major common denominator when adapting or integrating new technologies to provide awareness, engagement, and participation. By establishing purposeful social media activism, local citizen awareness on social and political matters can increase while driving a narrative the group cares about. Social media activism requires organizations or individuals to be purposeful in creating an online infrastructure offering speed in the dissemination of information, organize contacts for volunteers and supporters, mobilizing tool to give all pertinent event details, and instructions on what individuals can practically do. This also includes being purposeful in online activities by providing important protest event details online with date, time, location, time, and instructions on what to do at the protest for participants. Collecting participant contact information using various social media platforms may also be beneficial. By using social media platforms political activists should (1) identify a shared collective issue of a group,
(2) create social media pages or online groups related to collective issue, (3) repost content related to incidences of collective issue, and (4) encourage other people to act on a political issue by joining an organization. Additionally, the empowerment of organizations and their shared goals of social justice increase the likelihood of individuals joining their efforts towards volunteerism, support, donations and general participation.
APPENDIX A

Social Media Usage and Social Justice Survey

The Influence of Social Media on Present-Day Social Justice Movement Organizing, Strategizing and Mobilizing

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a Masters Student in the Political Science Department at Clark Atlanta University. I invite you to participate in a social media usage and political engagement study which focuses on the role of social media and its influence on community organizing, strategizing and mobilizing for social justice.

This questionnaire will take only seven minutes to complete. The purpose of this study is to learn more about social media usage factors that influence the level of online political behavior towards offline participation behavior, especially in the area of protesting among African Americans. The findings will be used for an analysis in my graduate thesis. I appreciate your cooperation. Because we want all responses to remain confidential, please do not put your name on the questionnaire. Choose only one answer for each question; please respond to all questions.

Again, thank you for your time and cooperation.

Jarrod K. Grant, April 2017

Please choose the best answer for each statement. Place a mark (X) next to the appropriate answer.

SECTION I – DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Select your gender: (1) _____ Male (2) _____ Female

2. I am _______ years old.

3. My ethnicity is:
   (1) _____ Black/African American (2) _____ White
   (3) _____ Hispanic (4) _____ Other (indicate)

4. What is your marital status?
   (1)_____ Single (2)_____ Married (3)_____ Common Law (Living together)
   (4)_____ Divorced (5)_____ Separated (6)_____ Widowed
5. My religious affiliation is
(1) ____ Lutheran  (2) ____ Pentecostal  (3) ____ Catholic
(4) ____ Baptist  (5) ____ AME  (6) ____ CME
(7) ____ Presbyterian  (8) ____ Methodist  (9) ____ Non-Denominational
(10) ____ Muslim  (11) ____ Ifa (Yoruba)  (12) ____ Akan
(13) ____ Kemetic  (14) ____ Vodun  (15) ____ Buddhism
(16) ____ None (Believe in Supreme Entity but don’t belong to any group)
(17) ____ Atheism  (18) ____ Other

SECTION II – SOCIOECONOMIC INFORMATION

6. What is your zip code: ______________

7. How would you describe your community?  (1) ___ Urban  (2) ___ Suburban  (3) ___ Rural

8. What is your occupation? __________________________

9. What is your employment status?
   (1) ___ Unemployment  (2) ___ Self employed
   (3) ___ Part-time employed  (4) ___ Employed full-time

10. In which of the following income ranges does your yearly income fit.
    (1) ___$0 - $14,999  (6) ___$35,000 - $39,999  (11) ___$60,000 - $64,999
    (2) ___$15,000 - $19,999  (7) ___$40,000 - $44,999  (12) ___$65,000 - $69,999
    (3) ___$20,000 - $24,999  (8) ___$45,000 - $49,999  (13) ___$70,000 - $74,999
    (4) ___$25,000 - $29,999  (9) ___$50,000 - $54,999  (14) ___$75,000 - $79,999
    (5) ___$30,000 - $34,999  (10) ___$55,000 - $59,999  (15) ___$80,000 - $84,999
    (16) ___$85,000+

11. How many years of schooling have you completed? _____
    (1) ___ Primary School (K-6th)  (2) ___ Secondary (7th-12th)  (3) ___ Associate (13-14 yrs)
    (4) ___ University (13-16)  (5) ___ Masters (17-18)  (6) ___ Doctoral (19-22 yrs)

SECTION III – OVERALL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>2-3 times a month</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>At least 3 times a week</th>
<th>Every day, once a day</th>
<th>Every day, more than once a day</th>
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12. How often do you use Facebook? [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

13. How often do you use Instagram? [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
15. How often do you use Snapchat?  
   [ ] Never  [ ] Once a month  [ ] 2-3 times a month  [ ] Once a week  [ ] At least 3 times a week  [ ] Every day, once a day  [ ] Every day, more than once a day

16. How often do you use Google Plus?  
   [ ] Never  [ ] Once a month  [ ] 2-3 times a month  [ ] Once a week  [ ] At least 3 times a week  [ ] Every day, once a day  [ ] Every day, more than once a day

17. How often do you use Youtube?  
   [ ] Never  [ ] Once a month  [ ] 2-3 times a month  [ ] Once a week  [ ] At least 3 times a week  [ ] Every day, once a day  [ ] Every day, more than once a day

18. Considering your most frequently used social media site, how many contacts/friends/followers do you have?  
   (1) ___ Fewer than 10  
   (2) ___ 10-50  
   (3) ___ 51-100  
   (4) ___ 101-499  
   (5) ___ 500 or more

SECTION IV – POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

19. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of liberals and conservatives. Here there is a 1-10 scale that goes from radical to ultra conservative. 1 means radical and 10 means ultra conservative. According to what the terms “radical,” “liberals,” “conservatives,” and “ultra conservative,” where would you place yourself on this scale? Select only one number

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   Radical  Liberal  Conservative  Ultra Conservative

Within the past 3 years, have you participated in the following political activities:

20. Registered to vote  
   0=No  1=Yes
   [ ] [ ]

21. Voted in the last Presidential election  
   [ ] [ ]

22. Attend any campaign events  
   [ ] [ ]

23. Follow any legislation related to criminal justice reform  
   [ ] [ ]

24. Communication with elected officials regarding police and community relation issues  
   [ ] [ ]
Considering your frequency of political engagement please rate the degree to which you engaged in the following activities in regard to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement:

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<tr>
<td>25. Talked politics among my family and friends</td>
<td>(1) Never</td>
<td>(2) Rarely</td>
<td>(3) Sometimes</td>
<td>(4) Often</td>
<td>(5) Always</td>
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<td>26. Talked about the candidate’s platform among my family and friends</td>
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<td>27. Read about politics in the newspaper or magazines</td>
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<td>28. Watched discussions about politics on TV</td>
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<td>29. Listened to discussions about politics on the radio</td>
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<td>30. Checked social media for news about politics</td>
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SECTION V – POLITICAL AWARENESS

Within the last 3 years, to what degree did you use social media to engage in political matters:

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<tr>
<td>31. Followed elected officials, candidates for office or other political figures</td>
<td>(1) Never</td>
<td>(2) Rarely</td>
<td>(3) Sometimes</td>
<td>(4) Often</td>
<td>(5) Always</td>
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<td>32. Posted your own thoughts or comments on political issues</td>
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<td>33. Encouraged other people to take action on a political issue</td>
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<td>34. Learned about political causes</td>
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Social Media for Opinion Expression

Within the past 3 years, have you used social media sites for expressing your opinion on the following:

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<td>35. Political issues</td>
<td>0=Did not</td>
<td>1=Yes I did</td>
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<td>36. Police brutality and misconduct along with related community outrage</td>
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<td>37. Community organizing efforts such as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement initiatives</td>
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Social Media for Activism

Within the past 3 years, have you used social media sites towards political activism by:

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<tr>
<td>38. Posting links to political stories or articles for others to read</td>
<td>0=Did not</td>
<td>1=Yes I did</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Clicking “Like” or promoting material related to political issues that others have posted</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. Posting video giving your own thoughts on political issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. Joining political, public or citizen-led causes on social network sites in the last 3 years related to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>42. Joining groups or pages such as Facebook related to the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>43. Creating social media pages or groups related to Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement</td>
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<td>44. Reposting content related to police killing incidences</td>
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SECTION VI – POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Within the last 3 years, indicate whether you engaged in the following activities in response to incidences of police brutality and misconduct:

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<tr>
<td>45. Attended public demonstrations, protests, rallies, etc.</td>
<td>0=Did not engage</td>
<td>1=Did Engage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Attended political forums</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Signed a petition to authorities</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Participated in meetings with authorities</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>49. Sent letter(s) to the media</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>50. Organized or helped to organize a protest, demonstration, rally, etc.</td>
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51. How many Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement demonstrations, protests, rallies or town hall meetings have you participated in within the last 3 years?

(1) 0  (2) 1-2  (3) 3-4  (4) 5-6  (5) 7-8  (6) 9-10  (7) 11+
Dear Davis|Bozeman Law Firm Community Service Division:

My name is Jarrod K. Grant and I am a Masters Student in the Political Science Department at Clark Atlanta University. I am currently working on my Thesis on social media users participating in political protesting during the present-day social justice movement also known as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement.

I am writing this letter to request participation in completing a brief questionnaire for African-American individuals who have protested and may be members in your organization Davis|Bozeman Law Firm Community Service Division (DB Law CSD). The questionnaire will take only seven minutes to complete and is anonymous. The purpose of this study is to learn more about factors that influence political protest participation through the use of social media. This includes questions specific to social media use covering individual’s political engagement, political awareness and social media activism. The findings obtain from the surveys will be collected and used in the final analysis of my Thesis.

If possible, please send your members and followers this hyperlink, https://goo.gl/forms/Sq7uPIFPCmr05OjJ2, to complete the survey. This hyperlink can be sent via email, on your social media platform(s), or by text. In addition, I would like to attend a regularly scheduled DB Law CSD meeting designated by yourself or a DB Law CSD representative to make an appeal to eligible members in attendance to complete the questionnaire. So that the regular business of the organization is not interrupted, the use of an unoccupied room or available space, for completion of this questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. I value the contribution that your members will add in the effort to gain a better understanding the degree to which social media influences African Americans towards political engagement centered on the present-day social justice movement also known as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement.

Thank you so much for your assistance and time towards this endeavor. I am also including a copy of the questionnaire so that you may be informed of its content. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (678) 522-2026 cell. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jarrod K. Grant
Masters Candidate
Dear Queen:

My name is Jarrod K. Grant and I am a Masters Student in the Political Science Department at Clark Atlanta University. I am currently working on my Thesis on social media users participating in the present-day social justice movement. I am writing this letter to request participation in completing a brief questionnaire for African-American individuals who have protested and are members in your organization The Community of Atlanta (CA). The participants would be asked to complete the pilot, or draft questionnaire to assist in determining whether any modifications are required. The questionnaire will take only seven minutes to complete and is anonymous. The purpose of this study is to learn more about factors that influence their political engagement participation, and includes questions specific to their social media use, their attitudes towards the elements of political engagement, their organization affiliations and the educational and informational activities they use as resources to make participation decisions. The findings of the information collected will be used in the final analysis of my Thesis.

If possible, I would like attending a regularly scheduled CA meeting designated by yourself or the CA representative and making an appeal to eligible members in attendance to complete the questionnaire. So that the regular business of the organization is not interrupted, the use of an unoccupied room or available space, for completion of this questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. I value the contribution that your members will add in the effort to gain a better understanding the degree to which social media influences African Americans towards political engagement centered on the present-day social justice movement.

Thank you so much for your assistance and time towards this endeavor. I am also including a copy of the questionnaire so that you may be informed of its content. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (678) 522-2026 cell. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jarrod K. Grant
Masters Candidate
Clark Atlanta University
Dear Mr. Washington:

My name is Jarrod K. Grant and I am a Masters Student in the Political Science Department at Clark Atlanta University. I am currently working on my Thesis on social media users participating in political protesting during the present-day social justice movement also known as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement.

I am writing this letter to request participation in completing a brief questionnaire for African-American individuals who have protested and may be members in your organization MAZE. The questionnaire will take only seven minutes to complete and is anonymous. The purpose of this study is to learn more about factors that influence political protest participation through the use of social media. This includes questions specific to social media use covering individual’s political engagement, political awareness and social media activism. The findings obtain from the surveys will be collected and used in the final analysis of my Thesis.

If possible, please send your members and followers this hyperlink, https://goo.gl/forms/Sq7uPIFPCmr05OjJ2, to complete the survey. This hyperlink can be sent via email, on your social media platform(s), or by text. In addition, I would like to attend a regularly scheduled MAZE meeting designated by yourself or a MAZE representative to make an appeal to eligible members in attendance to complete the questionnaire. So that the regular business of the organization is not interrupted, the use of an unoccupied room or available space, for completion of this questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. I value the contribution that your members will add in the effort to gain a better understanding the degree to which social media influences African Americans towards political engagement centered on the present-day social justice movement also known as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement.

Thank you so much for your assistance and time towards this endeavor. I am also including a copy of the questionnaire so that you may be informed of its content. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (678) 522-2026 cell. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jarrod K. Grant
Masters Candidate
Dear Anana Harris-Parris:

My name is Jarrod K. Grant and I am a Masters Student in the Political Science Department at Clark Atlanta University. I am currently working on my Thesis on social media users participating in political protesting during the present-day social justice movement also known as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement.

I am writing this letter to request participation in completing a brief questionnaire for African-American individuals who have protested and may be members in your organization SisterCare Alliance (SCA). The questionnaire will take only seven minutes to complete and is anonymous. The purpose of this study is to learn more about factors that influence political protest participation through the use of social media. This includes questions specific to social media use covering individual’s political engagement, political awareness and social media activism. The findings obtain from the surveys will be collected and used in the final analysis of my Thesis.

If possible, please send your members and followers this hyperlink, https://goo.gl/forms/Sq7uPlFPCmr05OjJ2, to complete the survey. This hyperlink can be sent via email, on your social media platform(s), or by text. In addition, I would like to attend a regularly scheduled SCA meeting designated by yourself or a SCA representative to make an appeal to eligible members in attendance to complete the questionnaire. So that the regular business of the organization is not interrupted, the use of an unoccupied room or available space, for completion of this questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. I value the contribution that your members will add in the effort to gain a better understanding the degree to which social media influences African Americans towards political engagement centered on the present-day social justice movement also known as the Black Lives Matter Social Justice Movement.

Thank you so much for your assistance and time towards this endeavor. I am also including a copy of the questionnaire so that you may be informed of its content. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (678) 522-2026 cell. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jarrod K. Grant
Masters Candidate
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