REACTING TO POLITICAL CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING

by

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(Under the Direction of Mardi Schmeichel)

ABSTRACT

Social media spaces are increasingly sites where people learn about the political and social landscape. Because social studies teachers can play a significant role in helping students make sense of a range of political and social issues, it is urgent to examine the role of social media in teachers' sense making. Thinking with poststructural theories of the subject, I employ Q methodology to examine how social studies teachers reacted to political content online and whether those reactions shape and inform the way they describe teaching about the embedded content. Specifically, 29 social studies teachers completed two separate Q-sorts with a collection of social media posts around the Black Lives Matter movement. They first sorted the 42 posts based on their personal reactions. They then completed another sort considering which of the posts they would be most likely to use in the classroom. By analyzing the generated factor arrays, the participants' written responses, and the interview data, I interpreted the factors as possible subject positions, recognizing that the teachers' engagement with the items and their responses during the process are emergent from and informed by discourse. My

findings suggest that teachers reacted to the content in ways that were informed by their political subjectivity—as the Curious Consolidator, the Dismissive Scroller, or as the Angered Constituent. When the participants shifted to thinking about their work as a teacher, they attempted to suppress their political subjectivity by taking up three different approaches to "neutral" pedagogy—the Context Provider, the Data Debater, or the Critical Confronter. Each of these slightly varied positions was tied to an underlying, pervasive position of Guide on the Side—where these teachers uniformly described presenting their students with both sides of the Black Lives Matter movement and inviting them to arrive at their own conclusions. I conclude by offering a few significant implications for the field of social studies and suggest that teachers must continually confront their work as inherently political while disrupting the notion that presenting "both sides" of political and social issues is an unquestioned good.

INDEX WORDS: Social Studies Education; Social Media; Subjectivity; Foucault; Q Methodology

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DEDICATION

To Kathleen and Fern –

You remain the part of my life in which I take the most pride.

For George Floyd and the countless Black men, women, boys, and girls unjustly killed –

I thought about your lives and legacies a lot while working on this project.

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CHAPTER 1

SITUATING SOCIAL MEDIA, BLACK LIVES, AND TEACHING

When writing[1]*, words often remain elusive. Sentences get strung together that fail to sufficiently capture what I had in mind. So writing is often a task I am skilled at avoiding. I mask my lack of discipline for focused writing with well-rehearsed justifications—I should clear my head; words will come when I am ready; I'll come back to this screen more ready after a break. So, as I too often do, I minimize the Word document. I find myself mindlessly scrolling through my Facebook feed, barely registering the posts—more habit than anything else. Digitally restless, I hop over to Twitter. Surely someone more brilliant and articulate than I will have some insight that jolts me into a writing spree. It's happened before, so why not today? But the truth is, procrastination is feeling far more engaging. And I just don't want to write today, despite ticking clocks and looming deadlines. I read a few threads about yet another state proposing legislation to ban Critical Race Theory and the overt racism of whitewashing history. Because there is a sequence to my social media spiraling, I open Instagram,*

[1] I have chosen to draw on the vignette form to introduce a few of the chapters in this dissertation for a couple reasons. First, this project centers social media and emerged from my own interest in, struggles with, queries about, and consumption of social media. As the writer of this dissertation, I wanted to continually and simultaneously confront my own social media habits as I investigated how other teachers engaged online. I am immersed in social media as I work to make sense of these digital spaces—*the call is coming from inside the house*. Second, early in my doctoral studies, I found myself drawn to St. Pierre's (1997) notion of transgressive data—these "data that were uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category" (p. 179). In my own experiences with this study, I have been thinking about my time in social media spaces as data that are difficult to capture, yet significantly informative. These vignettes—in the smallest way—pay tribute to the ways that my thinking and writing have been shaped by social media, alluding to the oft untraceable thoughts that converge as I (not-so-)mindlessly scroll through my feeds.

quickly scrolling through the latest string of posts since the last time I was on the app. Shamefully it's only been a couple hours since my last procrastination-induced-social-media cycle, so I find myself looking at some posts I had quickly scrolled through already. I notice a photo of a George Floyd mural and my thumb does whatever the equivalent of a double take is, reverse scrolling to get back to the post. I hadn't realized it was the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's murder.

An Instagram post from Barack Obama had stopped me in my tracks (https://www.instagram.com/p/CPTNmW6NXOs/). In the five hours since Obama had published the post around 340,000 people had liked the post and nearly 2,000 had left a comment. It's a sobering reminder. This man's murder—in so many ways—had become central to this dissertation project. The outcries for justice and reform which spanned social media were woven into nearly every decision I made. I find myself asking, in the span of one year, what progress has been made? What tangible changes have happened in response to the murder of yet another Black man in the United States? Progress is slow and too often not linear. It's taking steps forward and steps back. It's changing paths and arriving at intersections going in myriad different directions. Use of force policy can be reformed, police funding can be reallocated in various cities, and still other Black men and women are killed. National movements can lead to people making bold proclamations of allyship and co-conspiratorship, politicians can advance justice-oriented policies, and there are still too many people denying the deep roots of racism and white supremacy, still legislation proposals seeking to suppress voters. These messy tangles of progress and frustration shape my thinking and writing. They spur me to put words on a page, knowing they are always insufficient, continually falling short. The

need for justice is urgent and I have no illusions that this writing remedies the persistent injustices of today. There is much work to be done, so for now, I turn off my phone and return to the blinking cursor, thinking about Obama's reference to James Baldwin, who said we must "cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it." What might it mean if we face the realities of schooling to begin to change them?

Introduction

On May 25, 2020, a Black man named George Floyd was murdered. Former Minnesota police officer Derek Chauvin kneeled on Floyd's neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds[2]. On the sidewalk nearby, a 17-year-old named Darnella Frazier pulled out her phone, recording what would become a 10-minute, widely shared, viral video—and a key piece of evidence in Chauvin's trial. Her video would disprove the official police narrative, which claimed Floyd experienced a medical incident, failing to mention the prolonged restraint. Police officers have so rarely been convicted of murder for on-duty killings, but on April 20, 2021, Chauvin was convicted of the murder of George Floyd.

The advocacy for justice for George Floyd's murder has largely been attributed to the Black Lives Matter movement. The Black Lives Matter movement is comprised of a decentralized network of activists and organizations working to protest racially motivated violence and police brutality against Black people. The collective organizing and advocacy work done through the movement has had significant impacts on the national

[2] Although body camera footage released in August 2020 revealed the actual time was 9:29, 8:46 has been the time span used to commemorate Floyd's life, used in die-in protests, and used as a symbol of calls for justice throughout the summer of 2020.

conversation around racial justice and policing. By emphasizing local organizing, the grassroots movement has had a broad reach and has come to "encompass all who publicly declare that Black lives matter and devote their time and energy accordingly" (Freelon et al., 2016, p. 9).

Notably, the Black Lives Matter movement is inseparable from its long history of leveraging social media as a vital forum for raising awareness, mobilizing supporters, and advocating for collective action (for more see Freelon et al., 2016). Social media platforms have been integral to the movement's work. In its origin, the movement was no more than a hashtag—#BlackLivesMatter. In July 2013, activists took to Twitter and Facebook following the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who had shot and killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, posting under the shared hashtag. However, the hashtag, and what would become the associated movement didn't come to prominence until the summer of 2014. In July 2014, Eric Garner was killed after former police officer Daniel Pantaleo placed him in an illegal chokehold in New York. A month later, in August, Michael Brown was shot and killed by former police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Videos, images, and additional details of these cases were shared on social media—a national outcry for justice was building. Social media provided a platform for any user to post content to a growing audience through a searchable hashtag. The use of the hashtag expanded further in November, when #BlackLivesMatter was used 172,772 times on the day after the grand jury decided not to indict Wilson (Pew Research Center, 2016a).

Since the widespread national media attention to the protests in Ferguson in 2014, the Black Lives Matter networks have continued to use social media to share resources

online about anti-Blackness and issues of systemic racism, organize demonstrations nationally, and continue to raise awareness in response to the numerous deaths of Black men and women by police actions. As Richardson (2020) highlighted, the smartphone has become an instrument of social change—allowing Black activists to film and tweet fatal police encounters to challenge systemic racism. Numerous videos—like the one captured by Darnella Frazier—have circulated on social media platforms to expose these deadly encounters, allowing the nation to bear witness to the persistent harms of police violence and racial injustice.

The video of George Floyd's murder and the capacity of social media functioned to accelerate the movement—to call for racial justice, police reform, and justice to be served for the murder of Floyd. In the weeks immediately following Floyd's murder, I, like so many, became increasingly aware of the ways people in my own social networks were consuming and sharing content about racism and oppression and posting declarations of allyship. Accounts and people I had followed on social media for years began posting about the Black Lives Matter movement for the first time. The momentum for racial justice felt different. And—in the peak of Covid-19 lockdowns—social media seemed to be central to the building momentum. I do not want to reduce this movement to a social media hashtag or characterize any coalition-building with rose-colored glasses. I recognize that the pursuits of racial justice have been staunchly resisted and opposed and that the reach and impact have gone far beyond social media spaces. However, social media has played a significant role in the ways many people have learned about the ongoing incidents of racial violence and anti-Blackness the Black Lives Matter movement seeks to address.

Following the murder of George Floyd, the movement reached new levels of attention. The protests of 2020 constitute one of the largest movements in U.S. history, with estimates of 15 to 26 million participants (Buchanan et al., 2020). On May 28, 2020, three days after Floyd's death, nearly 8.8 million tweets featured the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and it was used around 47.8 million times on Twitter between May 26 and June 7 (Anderson et al., 2020). It is likely the widespread circulation of #BlackLivesMatter content impacted public perception. While the popularity and support for the Black Lives Matter movement have been contentious in its history, the support for the movement grew in the past year. By June 2020, a poll found that 67% of Americans expressed support of the Black Lives Matter movement (Pew Research Center, 2020). In the immediate aftermath of Floyd's death, support for the Black Lives Matter movements increased almost as much as it had in the preceding two years (Cohn & Quealy, 2020). Significantly, 23% of adult social media users said they changed their views about a political or social issue due to something they saw on social media, with many citing Black Lives Matter as a key example (Perrin, 2020).

As people increasingly spend time consuming political information and news online (e.g., Bode, 2016; Shearer, 2018), social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter, function to mediate new forms of political knowledge, engagement, and activism. Social media allows individuals to exchange information about politics, but also to publicly affiliate themselves with a group (Bode et al., 2014). The ways people have engaged with #BlackLivesMatter is a prime example. How social media functions to educate and mobilize users on a range of political and social issues warrants further attention. However, social media spaces are not democratic utopias, as I will explore in the

subsequent sections. The limitations of social media platforms have significant implications for the *ways* users are educated or mobilized.

Situating this Dissertation

In 2014, I was a middle school social studies teacher in a school district bordering Ferguson, Missouri. A few days before our first day of school, Michael Brown was killed. As a second-year teacher, I felt unprepared to be navigating the emerging and urgent conversations around race and white supremacy with my students. But I knew my students, who were mostly Black and Brown and profoundly connected to realities of racism and injustice, needed to hear that their white teacher cared and that he was listening. I look back on that school year and often wonder what else I could have done, how else I could have supported their frustration with a schooling system that perpetuated so many racialized harms, and how else I could have ensured they felt heard. I, along with a couple colleagues, invited students to respond to a survey about their experiences with race and racism in our school building. It felt urgent that we, as a group of teachers, confronted the ways our actions and classrooms practices—intentionally or not—were making our students feel. When we shared the responses with the faculty and staff of our building, it was significantly and remarkably resisted by the vast majority. So, as I tried to support my students in the meager ways I knew how, I was simultaneously navigating resistance, fear, and anger from colleagues and increasingly feeling ostracized in my building.

Through the school year, I found myself consuming information through social media. On one hand my scrolling and reading online helped me feel more prepared to field questions any students had or to respond to erroneous claims some students may

have seen or heard. Daily, students were coming in to class—"Did you hear this?" or "Is this true?". It was often overwhelming to carry the responsibility I felt for dispelling myths, validating experiences, and providing coherent and accurate information as it unfolded. In retrospect, my approach was likely less helpful than I thought. But online, I also learned a lot about some of my colleagues based on their social media activity—often disappointed in the vitriol they posted online. I was consistently surprised by the ways my colleagues would characterize the Black Lives Matter movement, failing to recognize the ways our students lives, experiences, and identities were tied up in the movement's aims. I know for many of them it felt personal—they had spouses who were police officers reassigned to patrol in Ferguson or they lived in towns destroyed and vandalized by fringe riots—but I still struggled to process it all. Social media was a significant space of learning during that year—learning about the growing Black Lives Matter movement and the protests happening around St. Louis *and* learning about the troubling views a few of my colleagues had toward people who looked like our students. Social media was an undeniable component of how I navigated that school year.

A few years later, when I entered my doctoral program, these experiences from the classroom (among many others) were fresh on my mind. I still thought about what I could have done differently with my students, still struggled to make sense of why some teachers were responding in the ways they did, and still found myself curious about the kinds of learning that happens on social media. In my early doctoral experiences, I was brought on to a project that examined how preservice teachers come to make sense of media literacy education. These experiences offered new insight into how social media works and how the preservice teachers I was working with would describe their social

media consumption. It prompted new questions that were largely unanswered in that project. Additionally, I began to learn about discourse theories and the ways we are embedded within particular power relations and discursive formations that inform how we make sense of the world. I was learning language and concepts that could help me unpack and name various experiences I had in the classroom. These theories offered news ways of thinking about the persistent problems I was identifying regarding teaching, social media, and political issues.

I offer these experiences to situate my interest in social media as a space where teachers learn about the political and social world. This dissertation study explores how teachers react to social media content dealing with political and social issues and how those reactions shape the kinds of teaching they describe. Specifically, this dissertation addresses two research questions:

- How do social studies teachers react to the political and civic sphere as presented on social media?
- Do social studies teachers perceive and respond to political content on social media in ways that shape what they envision doing in their classrooms?

Recognizing the significant circulation of content around Black Lives Matter and the increased public attention to the cause of racial justice and police reform over the last year, my dissertation study intentionally centers on the Black Lives Matter movement as a topic of interest. I have selected this topic because it is both urgent and ubiquitous. Racial justice is a matter of life and death—there are significant implications for how teachers react and make sense of anti-Blackness and police violence. Additionally, anyone who has access to the Internet has likely seen conversations around Black life and

policing circulate online. I felt confident any teacher would be familiar with Black Lives Matter posts, able to offer their reactions and insights into their views. However, this is a study of the ways teachers engage with social media more broadly. It was not designed as a study of the ways teachers talk about racial justice, political and social movements, or about their views on Black Lives Matter. Instead, social media content which circulated following George Floyd's murder served as a case for examining how teachers react to and teach with social media content. However, I want to note that, as a white researcher, I am cautious about being perceived as exploiting the topic of Black life and fights for racial justice in this project. For me, relying on Black Lives Matter is not just a vehicle for examining social media use. It remains urgent and vital that teachers collectively respond to racial injustice in ways that lead to systemic change. My focus on this movement is inextricably tied to my own experiences, shortcomings, and frustrations in the classroom. This project is thus tethered to my desire to seek answers to the varied questions that have been informed by my experiences.

In this chapter, I further contextualize this study by drawing on a range of extant literature. I first provide an overview of social media—more explicitly defining these virtual spaces and how they work. I also emphasize the ways political content circulates and is consumed on social media. I then turn to education to specifically highlight the ways social studies education conceptualizes how people come to social and political understandings. I first recognize the role of a teacher in teaching about social and political values, pointing to a growing body of work around teacher ideology[3] related to a

[3] Much of the extent literature in social studies education and beyond use the concept of "political ideology". Political ideology can signify a wide range of concepts—including ethical ideals, belief, and principles, political commitments, opinion, and views, and even partisan politics. Ideological commitments

teacher's work in the classroom. Then, I explore how schools engage with social media as a site for political engagement. Finally, I provide an overview of the chapters comprising this dissertation.

The Importance of Social Media

In this study, I use the term "social media" as an umbrella term for the sites and services often referred to as "social networking sites," "Web 2.0", and the online virtual platforms and mobile apps like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok. Following boyd's (2014) lead, I use social media to reference the "various communication tools and platforms" as well as "a cultural mindset that emerged in the mid-2000s" (p. 6). In this way, social media is a tricky concept to define. On the one hand, I am referring to actual, virtual spaces. For example, a person logs into a social media account, they can create and share information in the form of posts, and they engage with other users and consume their user-generated content. Social media are the spaces *where* new or different connections, access, and engagement are possible. On the other hand, social media also refers to a particular set of technologies that function to promote a sense of social connection, engagement, and way of being. In this form, social media is productive—they position users, they guide users, and they afford and constrain particular kinds of engagements online. Social media are also spaces that inform *how* connections, access, and engagement are promoted. boyd (2014) uses the concept of

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can contain assumptions about how the social and political world is and ought to be. However, recognizing "ideology" as situated within a particular theoretical paradigm, I elect to use the term "political subjectivity" in my own analysis in this dissertation. However, I do draw on literature examining political ideology to inform my own work. In the context of this dissertation, I conceptualize political ideology and political subjectivity as parallel concepts and terms.

networked publics to highlight the social, communal aspect of these virtual spaces—spaces to "gather, connect, and help construct society as we understand it" (p. 9).

Before further exploring social media, it is worth noting that Vaidhyanathan (2019; 2018) argued there are two differing views of the Internet (and, by extension, social media). He outlined one view, which is utopic, where technologies offer new possibilities which can enhance democracy. This is echoed by Lewis (2020), who identified that techno-utopian mythologies "highlight the potential of social media to promote progressive ideals of social equality" (p. 203). Vaidhyanathan (2019) then identified another view, one rife with dark systems of surveillance, tracking, and manipulation, which undermine the ideals of democratic freedom. This view has been echoed in popular critical thought by Marantz (2019) and Turner (2019), who highlighted how these hopeful platforms have been co-opted by bigotry and authoritarianism. As such, the orientation to *how* social media acts upon its users can highlight specific possibilities of these spaces as well as the ways they can function to constrain other possibilities.

Much of the early and ongoing research around social media draws on Gibson's (1977) work in ecological psychology around *affordances*. He uses this concept to explain how the environment surrounding an animal constitutes a set of opportunities or potentialities for a set of actions. The notion of affordances became popularly applied in technology studies to make sense of the relationship between online environments and the people who engage in them (see Ellison & Vitak, 2015; Bucher & Helmond, 2018). The concept of affordances allows scholars to examine what practices or knowledge are made possible or encouraged through these new technological spaces. For example, many

studies have pointed to the ways social media platforms provide a voice to people who have often been excluded from public conversation (e.g., Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016). Other scholars, like boyd (2010), have focused on the new social structures that are formed in and through social media technology. boyd identified four affordances of social media platforms: persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. These affordances introduce new possibilities for amplifying, recording, and spreading information. Other scholars have explored the new opportunities for innovative forms of protest (e.g., Earl & Kimport, 2011), mobilizing collective action (e.g., Rosenbaum, 2019), and for the formation of collective identities (e.g., Khazaree & Novak, 2018). This work is significant because it traces new possibilities and opportunities for how individuals learn about civic life.

As I have highlighted, social media is one arena for engaging with new forms of community under a (new) set of practices. However, while new affordances are created through social media, it is equally important to attend to how these affordances are shaped and constrained by the platforms themselves. Specifically, the mechanisms and algorithms of social media intentionally produce particular kinds of behaviors and practices. For instance, Noble (2018) highlighted how algorithms are far from neutral by describing how Google's search engine reinforces racism through its search results and auto-complete suggestions. Additionally, scholars have extensively critiqued platforms like Facebook for prioritizing their corporate interests over user data privacy (e.g., Tufekci, 2018). For example, these social media companies' profit motives have normalized the collection and selling of personal data—primarily in the form of personalized advertisements. The presence of these microtargeted ads and the design of

algorithms that privilege specific posts on a feed gives the illusion of an organic experience when in reality, the social media platforms have intentionally and strategically curated the content with which a user interacts. Bucher (2012) highlighted the increasing complexity of Facebook's algorithms, which are designed to anticipate and predict profitable interactions. Because the content presented on a user's feed is often based on prior online engagement, these algorithms increase the likelihood of echo chambers, where users interact with people and content already similar to them (Cohen, 2018; Messing & Westwood, 2014; Boutyline & Willer, 2017). These few examples from a growing body of scholarship reinforce the notion that social media platforms are far from neutral but rather have particular mechanisms to direct users toward particular behaviors.

Social Media and Political Content

There has been growing attention to the implications of social media on democracy. A recent edited volume offered an interdisciplinary examination "of the literature on disinformation, polarization, echo chambers, hate speech, bots, political advertising, and new media" (Persily & Tucker, 2020, p. 2). However, as Kreiss (2021) noted, too often this kind of work overlooks the decades long work examining social media and democracy—framing this work as a new field exploring new concerns—including disinformation and polarization. By framing much of this body of work as emergent from problems following the 2016 U.S. presidential election and Brexit, Kreiss (2021) argued that this work becomes "generally concerned with social media and democratic ills, not the potential of social media and social movements to create radical possibilities for contemporary democracy" (p. 2). The affordances of social media for democracy are significant—and not to be overlooked. Additionally, I do not intend to

claim social media is the sole cause for polarization or users' susceptibility to dis- and misinformation campaigns. These too are historically and socially situated phenomena that predate the social media era. However, there are significant ways social media has transformed the ways users engage with political information.

Notably, social media has loosened the gatekeeping associated with traditional forms of news media—users become the producers and consumers of content on social media. Research suggests that users are increasingly providing political information and commentary to other users (Moy et al., 2013). As a result of this new and evolving digital landscape, people are increasingly relying on social media as a source for political news and information (e.g., Bode, 2016; Shearer, 2018). In some ways, these findings may seem promising. As Bode et al. (2013) noted, "a basic tenant of democratic thinking is that voters' choices must be based on informed thinking about political issues" (p. 7). Because social media users have more access and exposure to political information, there are more opportunities for informed thinking and gains in political knowledge.

However, there are significant limitations to the ways people interact with political content on social media and it remains unclear if the information users are exposed to on social media significantly impact their political knowledge and learning. Importantly, while Bode (2016) found that social media increased opportunities to engage with political content, she recognized there were constraints on what information users are exposed to and how they respond to that content. She said:

> social media use is an important new flow of political information in American politics, and to understand how citizens form opinions, adjust attitudes, and

> motivate behaviors, we must also understand what political information they are exposed to via social media and what they learn from it. (p. 42).

For instance, many scholars have pointed to the incidental exposure to political information on social media (Weeks et al., 2017; Feezell & Ortiz, 2019; Lu & Lee, 2019). This work emphasizes the ways users often passively consume political information as they scroll through their social media feeds. Rather than seeking out news sources or searching for information on political and social issues online, the curation of their social media feeds includes political information and thus passively consuming political information is considered a by-product of social media engagement. This incidental exposure typically leads to users encountering more news sources than when they actively seek out information (Fletcher & Nielson, 2017). Important to note, however, is that this can lead to people believing they no longer need to actively seek information—adopting a perspective that the "news will find me". This perception can have negative effects, including decreased political knowledge and political interest (Gil de Zúñiga & Diehl, 2019).

Many scholars have highlighted the ways social media can lead to selective exposure to political information (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Garrett, 2009; Garrett, 2013; Feezell, 2016; Messing & Westwood, 2014). As this work has argued, users online often see political information they are already aligned with, rather than counter-attitudinal information. This tendency to see ideologically aligned content has invited further consideration of the structure of social media platforms, examining how they shape what and how people are exposed to political content online. This includes investigations of underlying algorithms (e.g., Cohen, 2018; Pasquale, 2015; Thorson et al., 2019; Noble,

2018) and the echo chamber effects of social networks online (e.g., McPherson et al., 2001; Boutyline and Willer, 2017; Jacobsen et al., 2016). Collectively this work has raised concerns about the consequences of online selective exposure on the health of democracy.

However, some of this work has suggested that users do not completely disregard or ignore posts they come across that are counter-attitudinal (e.g., Bakshy et al., 2015). Garrett (2009) found that while users are more apt to engage with likeminded information, they are not typically avoiding dissonant information. Research has indicated that, as a result of motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2006), many people can readily dismiss or counter-argue challenging information to maintain preexisting biases. While most people say they tend to ignore when a connection on social media posts something about politics that they disagree with, some said they actively respond to social media content with which they disagree (Pew Research Center, 2016b). Further, as users become more aware of echo-chambers, many people feel they should be more open-minded and actively work to reduce their selective exposure (Dylko, 2016). This work collectively reveals how one's exposure to and engagement with political content on social media has significant impacts on how they make sense of the political landscape, how they respond to those with opposing views, and how they come to adopt particular perspectives.

Political Socialization, Social Studies Education, and Social Media

In this section, I take a step back to think about how education scholarship has conceptualized the ways people come to gain political knowledge and develop civic commitments. While the research on social media and democracy is increasingly relevant

to the field of education, an attention to social media as a site of political learning remains largely underexplored in education. In particular, the goals and aims of social studies education offer opportunities to engage, examine, and center social media as a space of civic development.

Social studies scholars have long been interested in preparing students to become citizens in a democracy (NCSS, 1979; NCSS, 2016). This mission has created a sort of dual focus in civic education research. On the one hand, there are bodies of work that focus on the *processes* by which young people come to make sense of and internalize ideas, beliefs, and attitudes about the political sphere. On the other hand, continually growing bodies of literature focus on the *content* necessary for promoting a democratic citizenry. Broadly speaking, these works often ask what knowledge, skills, and attitudes should be promoted in social studies classrooms? The challenge, then, is the lack of a consensus on what ought to be included as necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In short, what constitutes a "good citizen" remains up for debate (e.g., Westheimer, 2019; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Social studies scholars often approach these questions pedagogically–considering what is currently happening in schools (e.g., Hess, 2009), what can be done in teacher education spaces (e.g., Rubin et al., 2106), or examining how citizenship education could be reimagined (e.g., Sabzalian, 2019). The relationship between *how* people come to make sense of the political landscape and *what* that sense making should be are often difficult to untangle. Because social media is increasingly a space where users—including teachers and young people alike—are interacting with and consuming political information, the field of social studies must take social media

seriously as an arena of political formation. This dissertation study aims to more clearly explore the relationships between social media and social studies teaching.

Political Socialization

Political socialization is one of the prominent way the field of social studies has framed how people come to political ideas and values. The concept of political socialization is often traced back to Hyman (1959), a sociologist who described the process as a person's "learning of social patterns corresponding to his societal positions as mediated through various agencies of society" (p. 18). In short, Hyman drew from the fields of psychology and political science to synthesize a theoretical focus on the process by which social institutions instill political values in young people. As Niemi and Hepburn (1995) noted, Hyman's work reflected a general shift in political science research from political institutions and political knowledge toward an interest in political behaviors (e.g. conventional and unconventional forms of political participation), in addition to political attitudes (e.g. political values or identity) and political engagement (e.g. political interest and political efficacy). Political socialization, as a body of work, therefore, focuses on how subjects learn about political systems, develop particular attitudes towards politics and citizenship, and, in many cases, assimilate to current political systems and structures which serve as antecedents for future political behavior.

Because political socialization is viewed as a process of largely informal learning, this process is "mediated through various agencies of society" (Hyman, 1959, p. 18). These agents include, but are certainly not limited to the family (e.g. Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Flanagan et al., 1998; Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Jennings, 1996), schools (e.g. Massialas, 1970; Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Verba et

al., 1995; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Zukin et al., 2006), religious affiliations (e.g. Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Verba et al., 1995; Youniss et al., 1999), mass media (e.g. Chaffee et al., 1970; Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Zukin et al., 2006), and peers (e.g. Wentzel & McNamara, 1999; Yates & Youniss, 1998; Flanagan et al., 1998; Hess & Torney, 1967). These agents can "either directly or indirectly teach children about politics but also have a mobilizing function as they influence, encourage, or discourage young people's political preferences and political action" (Neundorf and Smets, 2018, p. 6). In short, in political socialization research, each of these agents functions to shape the emerging political understandings of people.

Much of the work in education recognizes the school as a significant agent of political socialization. Scholars have explored the role of the classroom climate, for example, in the development of student political attitudes, engagement, and knowledge (e.g. Torney-Purta, 2002; Campbell, 2006; Campbell, 2008). This work has argued that "how free students feel to express their opinions and have them discussed and respected" (Neundorf & Smets, 2018, p. 8) is linked to their political socialization. Furthermore, Neundorf et al. (2016) found that civic education in schools can compensate for a lack of parental socialization at home. More generally, many scholars cite the work of Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), which showed that an increase in political knowledge leads to increased political engagement. It is therefore argued that education in schools is a significant space to increase political knowledge and thus political engagement. These studies argue that schools are significant agents for political socialization. Significantly, political socialization is not the only way scholars have framed how people come to political ideas and values.

For instance, the field of social studies education has consistently referred to this process as civic identity development. While there are some similarities and overlap between work on "political socialization" and "civic identity development", the distinction for the purposes of this study is the often-embedded assumption that there are particular civic identities that are desirable for increasing political interest and engagement. This is unlike political socialization literature, which is primarily concerned with examining what people know and believe without prescribing any particular path forward. In short, socialization literature seems to explore what people come to know and how they act in relation to the political sphere. Civic identity work seems to consider what kinds of citizens are promoted and created in society and to what ends. Additionally, within social studies education, the focus on civic identity development more explicitly centers the work of teachers and schools in this process. For example, because "teachers create miniature social systems in their classrooms, where politically relevant behavior (e.g., attitudes toward authority or ways of handling conflict) is modeled and practiced" (Bickmore, 1993, p. 342), there has been a growing concern for the kinds of practices and behaviors modeled in schools. I draw on this work in order to focus on teachers and their role in helping students make sense of the political landscape.

The Political Teacher

Recognizing the school as a space where people come to make sense of the political landscape, Levine (2010) wrote about an important distinction between two conflicting functions of social studies, to either socialize students toward shared values and beliefs or to produce citizens who think critically and independently. Social studies research has grappled extensively with these conflicting goals, offering a range of models

or typologies of civic identities presented in social studies classrooms—models which on one extreme can socialize students toward the status quo or can orient them toward radically reimagining society on the other (e.g., Barr et al.,1977; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Evans, 2008). These ranging conceptualizations present in the social studies literature have revealed differing purposes and orientations among social studies teachers.

Concerns over the kinds of civic education taking place in schools, as well as the understandings and assumptions of social studies teachers in this process, led to a growing body of work around social studies teachers' perceptions of civic education (e.g., Torney-Purta et al., 2005; Anderson et al., 1997). Exploring teachers' understandings and sense-making of the current social and political ecology, of the purposes of civic education, and their assumptions about democratic life warrant renewed attention. Through this, it is important to explore the relationship between political partisanship and teachers' pedagogical practices explicitly.

Recent work has identified political ideology as a driving force that influences decisions in the social studies classroom (Knowles, 2018, 2019; Knowles and Castro, 2019). Because teachers are themselves ideologically driven political actors, Knowles (2018; 2019) traced connections between the common models and typologies of civic identities (e.g., Barr, Barth, and Shermis, 1977; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Knight Abowitz and Harnish, 2006; Evans, 2008) and the ideological orientations of the participants. Knowles's (2018) work reiterates that teaching is not a politically neutral endeavor (e.g., Heybach, 2014) and that teachers often express their ideological views in myriad ways. He developed a scale to assess a teacher's Civic Education Ideology

(CivID) which identifies teachers as having either a conservative, liberal, or critical orientation to what civic education ought to include. Under a conservative perspective, civic education functions to promote a "unified national identity and social order as well as pride and response for constitutional republicanism and American exceptionalism" (p. 75). Teacher adopting this perspective are most likely to employ teacher-centered and textbook-driven practices. A liberal orientation acknowledges the social and political inequalities in society and thus aims to prioritize engaging with diverse perspectives, deliberating democratic ideals, and empowering marginalized communities to engage in the political process. The liberal teacher is likely to value discussion and deliberation as instructional practices. Finally, a critical orientation to civic education "calls for great social and institutional change by emphasizing issues of group membership and structural oppression" (p. 78). Critical pedagogies would reject aspirations of objectivity or neutrality to more explicitly address unequal cultural and political dynamics. As his work highlights, a teacher's ideological commitments are inseparable from their role as an educator of young people—often informing the instructional practices they self-reported.

Nevertheless, a continued finding in social studies research is the articulated desire to remain politically neutral in the classroom (e.g., Ross, 2000; Journell, 2013; Journell, 2017; Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2014). This draw to neutrality can be traced to many possible factors, including, for example, limited knowledge of many aspects of the political sphere (e.g., Journell, 2013) or the political context in which teaching occurs (e.g., Cherner and Curry, 2019). Eliasoph (1998) argued that draws to neutrality could be rooted in social norms that often discourage dissent. She noted that participants in her study would talk about concerns openly until they reached a point where the concerns

might be construed as contentious and political or sided when they began to withhold views and revert to silence and the safety of privacy. While disrupting the assumption it is possible for social studies teachers to make neutral pedagogical decisions in their classrooms (e.g., Niemi & Niemi, 2007) remains necessary within the field, the tensions many teachers feel around political disclosure are not insignificant (e.g., Geller, 2020; Dunn, Sondel & Baggett, 2019; Hess & McAvoy, 2014; Journell, 2011; 2016; Kelly 1986). Out of fear that teacher political disclosure is equivalent to indoctrination, scholars have worked to offer insight into potentially ethical approaches for disclosure (e.g., Kelly 1986; Journell, 2016). However, as Geller (2020) noted, the current political climate in the United States serves as a particularly potent backdrop for exploring how teachers make pedagogical decisions around political and social issues.

In exploring the role of the teacher's partisanship, it is also important to (re)consider the ways teachers are also entrenched in the landscape of which they are tasked to help students navigate and make sense. For example, Clark, Schmeichel, and Garrett (2020) noted that social studies teachers tend to view ideologically aligned news sources as an indicator of credibility. Explorations of political disclosure must therefore be overlaid with significant attention to how teachers themselves consume news media, accommodating motivated reasoning, for example (e.g., Kunda, 1990; Taber & Lodge, 2016; Kahne & Bowyer, 2017), as well as the diminishing reliance on facts, or "truth decay" (Kavanaugh & Rich, 2018), and the circulation and consumption of misinformation and disinformation (e.g., Bennett and Steven, 2018; Marwick and Lewis, 2017; Atwell et al., 2017; Humprecht et al., 2020). In this study, I center the evolving and shifting nature of news media consumption via social media in order to explore how

teachers' exposure to political discourses online may constitute them as particular kinds of political actors, shaping the ways they imagine and describe their teaching practices.

Social Media in Education

I again return to social media to emphasize the need to more fully attend to these digital spaces—analyzing how they shape the perceptions of students and teachers alike. Moffa et al., (2016) noted that social media acts as an agent of political socialization because "the messages adolescents received through social media contribute to an understanding of their society's political culture" (p. 144). This is echoed by Neundorf and Smets (2018) who also gestured toward the role of social media in the political socialization of young people. Social media, for them, blends the agencies of peers and traditional mass media. More specifically, they are spaces where young people are not only "mobilized by their peers, [but] they also discuss sociopolitical issues together, share popular culture, and develop (common or opposing) sets of values" (p. 8-9). Much of this work, as I will highlight, focuses on how "educators must learn how to best incorporate this new space into the curriculum" (Moffa et al., 2016, p. 144). What is missing is attention to the ways teachers are also impacted and shaped by "the power of social media discourses to transmit political culture…and its ability to simultaneously promote democratic engage and insularity" (p. 144).

Techno-Utopianism

Broadly speaking, I would argue that the vast majority of education research thus far has framed social media around what it makes possible for teaching and learning and thus envisions a sort of techno-utopia. In many ways, this framing may not be surprising. Because much of the research on civic education has pointed "to opportunities for civic

engagement in the contexts where young people spend time" (Flanagan and Christens, 2011, p. 2), many scholars have worked to point out the value and need for centering social media in education spaces (e.g. Damico & Krutka, 2019; Greenhow & Askari, 2017; Krutka & Carpenter, 2016; Krutka & Carpenter, 2017; Durham, 2019). Krutka and Carpenter (2016) suggested that "if teachers hope to educate children for the world in which they live, then social media must have a place in school experience" (p. 7). Durham (2019) extended this argument noting that because students interact with the world in new ways, including through social media, these platforms should be centered in schools as sites where "critical investigations into worldly engagement can and should occur" (p. 755). Furthermore, Kahne et al. (2013) found that nonpolitical online activity "serves as a gateway to important aspects of civic and, at times, political life" (p. 12). As such, social media is viewed as a space to be leveraged for more engaging civic education.

Several published volumes have explored the intersections of social media and civic engagement among young people. Ratto and Boler's (2014) edited volume, *DIY Citizenship*, highlighted the ways social media enables users to organize and protest in new ways, in particular looking at the affordances of user generated content. Middaugh and Kirshner's (2015) edited volume, *#youthaction*, explored the possibilities of digitally mediated civic education. Both of these volumes consider how digital spaces function to positions users (and citizens) in more active roles as they pursue new forms of participatory democracy, particularly in the context of educating young people. This kind of scholarship, in many ways, extends similar work outside of education around activism stemming from social media (e.g. Tufekci, 2017; Jost et al., 2018; McGarty et al., 2014),

and provides a vision for how social media can effect social change (e.g. Krutka & Heath, 2019). Additionally, it also extends discussions in education around how participatory citizenship can be better situated in the digital age (e.g. Kahne et al., 2016; Middaugh and Evans, 2018). As Cohen et al. (2012) claimed, social media helps groups and individuals exert both voice and influence on a range of issues. Highlighting the new possibilities of social media, Luttig and Cohen (2016) found that the young people who use social media for political purposes the most belonged to minority ethnic groups and those with the fewest socioeconomic resources. In this way, social media offers a way to mobilize youth, engage them in alternative forms of civic participation–as some argue it could serve as "the great equalizer" (Xenos et al., 2014). Furthermore, as Bennett et al. (2009) noted, digital spaces offer new "civic learning opportunities that reflect more self-actualizing styles of civic participation" (p. 105), rather than more traditional understandings of civic engagement. As such, social media introduces new entry points for civic education, because "many youth are heavily invested in online activities where they voice their perspectives on a range of societal issues, often without making connections to the formal political process." (Kahne et al., 2012, p. 433). Flanagan and Levine (2010) pointed to the democratic promise of social media sites, noting, "barriers to entry are low, communities of interest are diverse and numerous, and peers can recruit one another for political or service activities even if they are physically dispersed" (p. 173). This kind of scholarship works to reimagine the possibilities for civic engagement through social media by drawing on students' already existing engagements with these platforms (e.g. Middaugh et al., 2017; Ohme, 2019). Levinson (2010) noted that many current conceptualizations of "good citizenship" fail to account for new and emerging

ways of engaging through various Web 2.0 activities, relying instead on an "increasingly outdated and unrepresentative range of actions and behaviors" (p. 333). Therefore, social media are viewed as not only hopeful spaces to reimagine what it means for students (and adults) to be civically engaged and active participants, but they also could function to redefine what is expected of good citizenship.

As I mentioned, the emerging affordances and new forms of interaction offered by social media spaces have also garnered attention for what may be required of educators. For example, some scholars have focused on literacy approaches to consider what kind of digital literacies exist, how they function in the lives of young people, and how they may need to be taught in schools (e.g. Eshet-Alkalai, 2004; Galvin & Greenhow, 2020; Gleason, 2018; Greenhow & Gleason, 2012). For example, Galvin and Greenhow (2020) asserted that students spend more time writing on social media than they do in formal classroom spaces and thus reviewed how social media has been integrated into high school writing instruction. Other scholarship has taken a broader view, considering how educators must directly teach students about digital citizenship (e.g. Choi, 2016; Heath, 2018; Krutka & Carpenter, 2017).

But this work often—intentionally or not—presumes teachers are exempt from the ways social media work to impact digital citizenship and political sensemaking. Instead, social media is framed as a space where teachers can learn and engage. For instance, some scholars have explored how scholars and educators have used social media as a site for professional development. This has included work around using social media in teacher education with preservice teachers (e.g. Carpenter et al., 2017; Krutka et al., 2014; Gomez & Journell, 2017), as well as how inservice educators engage on

platforms for their own professional growth and development (e.g. Staudt Willet, 2019; Gao & Li, 2017; Krutka & Carpenter, 2016; Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Carpenter & Krutka, 2015; Carpenter et al., 2016). More research is needed on the ways teachers are also susceptible to the challenges of learning about the political and social world through social media.

Within education, Greenhow et al. (2019) proposed new directions for social media research. For example, they argued the current scholarship is too focused on the technology itself, primarily discussing social media as tools to be leveraged in the classroom, for example. Instead, they argued scholarship should focus on practices which engage social media, on how and why they might be used and how effective their use has been. This call, in many ways, seems to provide a more critical way forward—calling for a deeper assessment of whether these platforms and tools are ultimately leading to the techno-utopia.

Critical Explorations

Schmeichel et al. (2018), in reviewing the literature on youths' social media use, noted that many scholars frame engagement with social media in an "ahistorical and uncritical manner...as if it is a behavior and practice that has come from nowhere" (p. 3). This matter-of-fact framing is quite common in many of the techno-utopian approaches to social media research. For example, Knight Abowitz and Mamlok (2019), even though they were centering the hashtag #NeverAgainMSD in their study, gave only a surface treatment of social media, saying Twitter is "an adept medium for expressions of rage, disgust, judgement, and indignation" (p. 166), and that "these young activists are immersed in social media as a way of adolescent life" (p. 171). This kind of framing, as

Schmeichel et al. (2018) noted, risks reinforcing systems and processes as they exist and overlooks the corporate driven interests behind these platforms. As such, I characterize the more critical approach to social media studies as encompassing both those works which center "the way social media is acting *upon* us" (p. 4), and scholarship that attempts to outline the drawbacks of social media spaces.

To be clear, most of these critical analyses of social media platforms have taken place beyond the field of education. While this work may still center young people, it does not expressly consider pedagogical practices or implications for education. As I mentioned previously, some of this growing body of scholarship shows how these digital spaces "tend to be homophilic" where "citizens mostly interact with people who have similar ideological preferences and political views" (Neundorf & Smets, 2018, p. 9) as a result of the algorithms running the platforms. These kinds of explorations have highlighted the many ways social media platforms function to expose polarization, for young people and adults alike (e.g. Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Bennett & Steven, 2017). This diverse body of work centers the erosion of previous practices and values of democracy, replaced by muddled political knowledge, increasing partisanship, and the decline of democratic institutions.

Another line of inquiry has been to expose the underlying mechanisms and functions of social media. For example, Zuboff (2019) extensively outlined the emergence of "surveillance capitalism," tracing the ways in which personal data and social media use is collected, sold as a commodity, and thus increases profits for social media platforms and other online corporations. Duffy and Chan (2019) offered a similarly rich exploration of the mechanisms of surveillance across social media

platforms, highlighting how users respond to the current cultural moment where “young people are socialized to anticipate digital surveillance from various social institutions” (p. 132). Considering the real and perceived mechanisms of surveillance on social media works to expose the capitalist interests which drive them, while also working to inform users of their role.

While much of this critically oriented literature has emerged outside of the field of education, some scholars have brought similar critiques into (social studies) education research. For example, Kerr and Schmeichel (2018) explored gender differences in the Twitter chat #sschat. Given the idealistic vision of social media function as democratic spaces, giving equal voice to all users, they identified that too often “the rosy glow around the affordances of digital interaction may mask inequities” (p. 242). In their work, Kerr and Schmeichel revealed how gendered dynamics and power relations also function in these digital spaces. Further work around how societal inequities are reproduced in virtual spaces are necessary as scholars explore how civic education can better meet the needs of all students. Additionally, Krutka et al. (2019) recently pointed to the need to confront, or teach “against,” the neoliberal components of social media. For them, this means taking a curricular approach to teach about, for example, the corporate profits from user engagement, algorithms which amplify oppression, create echo chambers, and lead toward extremism, the rise of harassment and cyberbully, the role of distractions and “user choice”, as well as the gatekeeping for accurate information. This curricular vision certainly echoes the call previously advanced by Schmeichel et al. (2018).

I agree that it is increasingly vital that scholarship, both in and beyond education, begins to more fully center the logics and rationalities that are embedded within the very

design of social media spaces. However, in this study, I am interested in how teachers are also engaged on social media platforms—consuming a range of political content that informs their political knowledge. Without fully attending to how teachers are reacting to this content, we presume teachers are well equipped to support students in navigating the social media landscape. Further, it is important to consider if the political knowledge gained from social media impacts the ways teachers talk about political and social issues in the classroom. This study aims to open up this line of inquiry, more explicitly attending to the messy intersections of political subjectivity, social media consumption, and social studies teaching.

Dissertation Overview

In this chapter, I introduced the problem this dissertation aims to engage and reviewed the relevant background and literature to contextualize that problem. Having outlined the basis for which the rest of the dissertation responds, I offer a brief overview of the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 2, I advance a different way of conceptualizing how people come to make sense of the political and social world. Responding to the deep commitment in the extant social studies literature to center the humanist, positivist subject, I present the major theoretical concepts that guide my analysis in this study. Specifically, I draw on Foucault's work on subjectivity and subjectification to highlight the many discourses and logics that afford and constrain ways of thinking and being in the world.

Chapter 3 overviews my methodological framework for this study. I present the approaches traditionally used when employing Q methodology in research. In Q, researchers conduct by-person factor analyses to determine groups of people who share

common views or perspectives about a topic. I extend and complicate these approaches by centering the Foucauldian subject. I outline the theoretically informed modifications I made to more clearly align my commitments with my methodology. I present a more in-depth look at my research design, my participants, the social media content used in this study, and the modes of data analysis employed to interpret the generated data.

I then turn to presenting my analysis. In Chapter 4 I delve into discourse analysis methodologies to interpret the social media posts used in this study. Because this study relied on multimodal social media posts rather written statements more commonly used in Q studies, I attend to the various structural and discursive features of the posts. I emphasize the ways the form of these social media posts is inherently limiting and thus the posts tend to rely on binary oppositions.

Chapter 5 presents my analysis of the three factors, or what I frame as available subject positions, that emerged when teachers sorted the social media posts based on their reactions. I describe the Curious Consolidator, the Dismissive Scroller, and the Angered Constituent. I emphasize the significant differences in how these different groups of teachers responded to the post, while highlighting the ways political subjectivity seemed to inform each of the groups decisions. In other words, political views and perspectives surfaced in different ways but was significant for how each group of teachers reacted to content about Black Lives Matter.

Then, in Chapter 6, I explore how these teachers justified the ways they rearranged the social media posts when they were sorting based on which posts they would be most likely to use in their classroom. Because the three groups were significantly correlated, suggesting they shared a great deal in common, I first discuss

how their written and interview responses revealed a shared commitment to being a Guide on the Side, where they described "neutrally" presenting information and letting students arrive at their own conclusions about racial injustice and police violence. Then I highlight some of the differences across the three groups in the forms of the Context Provider, the Data Debater, and the Critical Confronter.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation by reviewing the key findings from my analysis and discussing implications for the field of social studies education. I offer a few lines of inquiry for future research. Overall, I argue that the data collected and analyzed in this study indicates that a teacher's political subjectivity has a strong effect on their reactions to social media content. Because these teachers worked to counter those reactions through a reliance on practices they perceived to be neutral, they—intentionally or not—made space for harmful and problematic perspectives.

CHAPTER 2

FOUCAULDIAN POSTULATIONS OF THE SUBJECT

I occasionally wrestle with drawing on the work of Foucault, and there are numerous reasons I struggle with claiming an allegiance to Foucauldian thought. In niche, graduate school social media spaces, I've come across a trope of white men performing the role of graduate student, often invoking Foucault as a way to stake out scholarly legitimacy. And well, here we are. I also recognize how white, European men have for too long dominated philosophical thought—excluding, stealing, and colonizing the knowledges of far too many marginalized "others". I continue to grapple[4] *with how others might perceive my use of Foucault.*

So, randomly stumbling on a few tweets about Foucault being a pedophile and rapist exacerbated my worries. What happens when we try to separate the ideas from the person? I sat in that tension for a few days, before coming across a new string of tweets refuting the original unsubstantiated claims[5]*. And I was struck with a new realization—I had been susceptible to misinformation and failed to interrogate the claims or the source. I found myself wondering what about the post made me read it as possibly true. It's possible my pre-existing reservations about thinking with Foucault made me more receptive to these critiques and accusations. But perhaps more likely is that this post*

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[4] grappling*:* another well-established graduate school trope.

[5] To be clear, I am not saying these rebuttal tweets absolved Foucault of any wrongdoing or definitively said he was a person of notable character. Instead, it prompted me to interrogate why I unquestioningly accepted the original tweet.

drew on dominant and oppressive discourses that, through their pervasiveness, still manage to creep their way into my sense-making. I have been immersed in discourses that have produced and normalized narratives and assumptions that I failed to actively work against in my Twitter scrolling—narratives about gay men and pedophilia which instantiate heteronormativity and anti-LGBTQ+ oppression, or about the West's fetishization and othering of the Orient which function to maintain colonizing logics, for example. These discourses limited what was thinkable about Foucault. Ah yes, Foucault is helping me thinking about why I believed false claims about Foucault. This too probably fits with the white boy grad student trope.

Introduction

The extant literature on how people come to political ideas and attitudes reflects a commitment to a normative model of humanity (e.g., Sherrod et al., 2010). By drawing on developmental models of learning, the essentialized subject common in traditional psychology is reproduced in education settings (Walkerdine, 1988) to predict and anticipate how and when people come to particular understandings of the political sphere (Hyman, 1959; Niemi & Hepburn, 1995) or to develop their civic identities (Flanagan & Christens, 2011). The seemingly linear processes of this paradigm of thought assume a coherent, rational individual capable of knowledge and presence (St. Pierre, 2000). By turning to Foucauldian conceptions of the subject, in what follows, I aim to imagine the process of political subject formation otherwise. In this chapter, I examine Foucault's subject—attending to the ways the subject emerges from discourse and is continually shaped by a range of technologies that guide them toward particular behaviors—to

emphasize the messiness of subjectification. Specifically, I argue that the subject is a productive way to think about how people come to make sense of and react to the political and social landscape online since social media has contributed exponentially to the process of political subjectification. Through this, I trace how Foucault's work enhances my thinking around the relationship between political content on social media and subjectivity. One way to (re)conceptualize civic education is to take seriously the suite of arenas in which subject formation happens and consider how those arenas animate or restrict possibilities for being, thinking, and learning.

Theorizing the Subject

The poststructural project works to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions and open up new ways of thinking and being. By rejecting the rational, humanist subject of the Enlightenment, early poststructural thinkers sought to more fully account for the many forces which shape the subject. Rather than working to uncover some hidden, *true* self, poststructuralists work to instead attend to the power-laden relationships which productively shape what is knowable and thinkable as "true." Foucault (1988) noted that through "different practices–psychological, medical, penitential, educational–a certain idea or model of humanity was developed, and now this idea of man has become normative, self-evident, and is supposed to be universal" (p. 15). Foucault's work destabilized these taken-for-granted framings of the subject to instead show how the subject is continually constituted through circulating discourses and practices. Therefore, the subject is a historically contextualized and contingent possibility, not a universal or essential truth. Additionally, Foucault recognized the subject as exceedingly complex rather than singular and stable, occupying a plurality of different subject positions across

social contexts. These subject positions "are discursively constructed in a historically specific social context; they are complex and plural; and they shift over time" (Fraser, 1990, p. 84). In other words, rather than a unified, linear process, the subject is messily (re)formed while occupying various subject positions across space and time.

Foucault (1984/1985), with his inclination "to begin and begin again, to attempt and be mistaken, to go back and rework everything from top to bottom" (p. 7), moved through various conceptions of the subject in his lifetime. As Rabinow (1997) stated, toward the end of his life, he "carried out a major recasting and consolidation of his core conceptual tools" (p. xvii). St. Pierre (2004) noted that across his work, Foucault shifted to explore how a subject is dispersed in discourse, a subject is constituted in discourse, and (perhaps finally) how a subject is constituted in practice. These shifting explorations do not supersede each other but highlight the way one's subjectivity is a multidimensional formation—developed in relation to others, to things, and to one's self. In the following sections, I briefly outline how Foucault's work traces the messy process by which a subject is constituted in and by discourse as well as through practice.

The Messy Process of Subjectification

In this study, I draw heavily from Foucault's (1982) argument that subjectification is the process that transforms individuals into subjects. The subject is both "subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (p. 212). Therefore, the subject is not universally given but is shaped and reshaped by forms of knowledge and techniques of power. As Davies (2003) suggested:

> the process whereby individuals take themselves up as persons are understood as ongoing processes. The individual is not so much a social construction that results in some relatively fixed end product, but one who is constituted and reconstituted through a variety of discursive practices. (p. xii)

In other words, the process of subjectification is ongoing, positioning the subject in a state of continual becoming, occupying available subject positions that are contingent on the current discursive formations. For instance, teachers are continuously subjected to the discourse of what that means to "be" a good teacher. These discursive formations shift and change over time and context, requiring teachers to adjust and adapt to the shifting demands and expectations. While some aspects of being a teacher may appear stable, consistently present in the available discourse, it is important to recognize these too are not universally given. Foucault (1984) stated, "we are always in the position of beginning again" (p. 47). This framing of the subject engages the tensions and contradictions that make up the subject, the mechanisms and technologies which function to regulate them in particular ways, and how discursive formations frame what and how one can "be."

The many discourses and practices that shape subjectification are complex, connected with a range of forces and institutions, norms and objectives, all entangled within the historical present. The logics informing subjectivity are, therefore, quite difficult to pin down. Foucault (as cited in Gordon, 1980) referenced Jean Tinguely's kinetic art sculptures, noting that the evolving and continually shifting power relations and mechanisms of subjectification are like one of Tinguely's "immense pieces of machinery, full of impossible cog-wheels, belts which turn nothing, and wry gear-systems: all of these things which 'don't work' and ultimately serve to make the thing

'work'" (p. 257). According to Rose (1996), subjectification is an assemblage of "parts that come from elsewhere, strange couplings, chance relations" (p. 38). I am interested in this messy functioning, marveling at the complexity that produces effects that have material meaning and consequences. I recognize that such complex systems are difficult to trace—often void of clear, straight lines of connection, making it challenging to untangle and identify the various cogs and levers. However, the messy functioning of these discourses produce effects that have material meaning and consequence. As such, I argue that rigid, bounded categories like "teacher", "political actor", or "social media user" are insufficient for exploring the messiness of subjectivity. Instead, my study considers the fluidity of these subject positions (among many others) to recognize the strange couplings and relations that might produce a particular subjectivity.

The messiness and contradictory nature of the Foucauldian subject opens up new possibilities for considering the many ways in which the political subject is continually formed. For example, such a framing goes beyond what the current education literature accommodates to more fully recognize the possible tensions between various overlapping yet distinct subject positions. This understanding of the subject allows me to consider how participants draw on particular discourses to make sense of political content online and how these available discourses produce participants as certain kinds of subjects. In other words, in this dissertation study, I do not intend to predict the behaviors or practices of teachers in their classrooms—but rather to identify various subject positions available to teachers. As I will describe in Chapters 5 and 6, these subject positions are made legible through the discourse(s) participants draw on to construct their responses in this study.

Further, I argue that social media sites function as one space where the political subject is continually constituted—interacting with other social media users and engaging with a range of news media content while also being shaped by a myriad of mechanisms embedded in the platforms. Walkerdine (1988) noted that the subject is produced "through their insertion as relations within specific practices," and so it is vital to recognize the subject as "multiple, shifting, and at times contradictory" (p. 71). I claim social media spaces function as relations and practices which warrant additional analysis in order to understand how they contribute to political subjectification. How do social media spaces produce particular political subjects? How are these subjects continually constituted through their engagement with and consumption of political content online? Perhaps more explicitly, I am drawn to Rose's (1999) assertion that "subjectification is simultaneously individualizing and collectivizing" in that it is a process of "differentiating oneself from the kind of being one is not" (p. 46). In my thinking about the political subject, this is significant. Rose is pointing to how the subject is simultaneously a self-responsible subject *and* "subject to certain emotional bonds of affinity to a circumscribed 'network' of other individuals" (p. 176). For example, the subject can be simultaneously self-responsible for developing as a political subject *and* subjected to partisan or ideological bonds and allegiances. In considering how social studies teachers engage with political content on social media, I attend to these affinity communities to build on Foucault's notion of the subject in discourse and through practice. Because the subject now has access to a broader range of resources or techniques of subject formation through social media—a new range of ways to be a

political actor—explicitly attending to the bonds of political parties, for example, remains significant. Social media is one such arena for engaging with new forms of community.

The Subject in and by Discourse

Discourse, in a Foucauldian sense, is continually at work and is the mode in which collectively, we make sense of the world. Rather than some fixed reality one can *know*, discourse refers to the complex mode through which meaning is *produced*. What is possible to know, think, and become are bound by the specific discourses that are most readily available. For instance, within the field of education, scholars have examined the persistent constraints of gender discourses (e.g., Schmeichel, 2015), discourses of childhood (e.g., Davies, 2003) and adolescence (e.g., Lesko, 2012), and the function of neoliberalism as a discourse (e.g., Schmeichel, Sharma & Pittard, 2017). As this body of work highlights, discourses function as the force with which subjects can construct reality. Foucault (1964/1972) described discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49). This material-discursive connection includes how we can construct and make sense of ourselves—man, liberal, white, teacher. I can occupy each of these subject positions, but they can also limit and constrain what is thinkable and doable in those positions. As Fraser (1990) noted:

> To have a social identity, to be a woman or a man, for example, just *is* to live and to act under a set of descriptions. These descriptions, of course, are not simply secreted by people's bodies; still less are they exuded by people's psyches. Rather, they are drawn from the fund of interpretive possibilities available to agents in specific societies. It follows that in order to understand anyone's feminine or masculine gender identity, it does not suffice to study biology or

> psychology. Instead, one must study the historically specific social practices through which cultural descriptions of gender are produced and circulated. (p. 83).

These "funds of interpretative possibilities" are established through discursive formations, which not only provide a medium for interpretation but also "a menu of possible descriptions specifying the particular sort of person each is to be" (p. 83). Attending to this menu of descriptions highlights the affordances and constraints of being and becoming. It asks who and how can we be in particular moments and contexts? Additionally, these deeply embedded discursive formations produce and regulate certain kinds of truths, or what Foucault (1977/1980) calls *regimes of truth*, which become so engrained and taken-for-granted that they become hidden.

In this study, I consider some of the subject positions most commonly occupied by social studies teachers when engaging with social media. These positions are entrenched in particular discourses, which act upon participants in the study by shaping what is possible to say and think about their work in a classroom. Therefore, attending to discourse is essential because it allows me to name the forces working that make specific ways of thinking and talking about teaching possible while obfuscating alternatives.

The Subject Constituted in Practice

In addition to constituting the subject, discourses also produce particular ways of behaving and acting. As power relations produce subjects through discursive formations, those subjects are regulated to behave and act in particular ways. Foucault (1978/1991) attended to how the subject is constituted through practices, which he refers to as *regimes of practice*.

Across his work, Foucault's preoccupation with the subject relied on a genealogical "history of the present" (Burchell et al., 1991, p. ix) to trace how the subject is produced under current regimes of practice, from sovereignty to discipline and to governance. As the subject becomes constituted through discourse, they also begin to govern themselves toward particular ways of being and acting. For Foucault (1980/1991), to analyze regimes of practices is to analyze programs of behavior. These regimes "are fragments of reality which induce such particular effects in the real as the distinction between true and false implicit in the ways men' direct', 'govern' and 'conduct' themselves and others." (p. 82). In other words, these regimes of practice have material consequences determining the ways a subject can act. The myriad of mechanisms that function to guide subjects toward particular behaviors, what Foucault (1988/1997) refers to as technologies, are rooted in specific discourses and logics. These discourses, therefore, exercise power by "guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). Foucault (1988) illustrated the various ways power has been exercised toward particular ends over time, from an emphasis on control to one of docility and finally to attending to the conduct of others and the self. This body of work focusing on the conduct of behavior (Foucault, 1978/2007, 1978/2008) constitutes the field of governmentality studies.

On Governmentality

Governmentality, or the art of government, refers to the ways in which conduct is regulated according to particular rationalities. Rose and Miller (1992) frame this as linking the technical aspects of governing (*gouverner)* with the modes of thought or rationalities framing those aspects (*mentalité*). As such, to analyze the "mentalities of

government" is to identify ways of thinking about and responding to the problem of governing in pursuit of creating governable subjects. According to Foucault (1982), to govern is to "structure the possible field of action of others" (p. 221). Therefore, as Rose (1999) noted, in governmentality studies, government "refers to all endeavors that shape, guide, direct the conduct of others" (p. 3). To govern, then, is not referring exclusively to "the government" but instead takes a broader interpretation of how government is a form of behavior–including the exercising of power to conduct the conduct of others. Therefore, governmentality explores the various techniques developed to control, normalize, and shape people's conduct.

Foucault (1978/2007; 1978/2008) primarily introduced governmentality during his lectures at the Collège de France. To name the ways power is exercised to regulate particular ways of being, he focused on the underlying rationalities that have guided the art of governance throughout history. His tracing of regimes of practice over time allowed him to explicate the various ways power has been exercised for particular ends. In modern governmentality, the end is for subjects to regulate themselves–to conduct their own conduct and the conduct of others. However, Foucault (1978/2007) argued that the varying forms of power exercised in governance function together as a triangle, comprised of sovereignty, discipline, and government (p. 107). Therefore, governmentality utilizes the techniques, rationalities, and institutions of both sovereignty and discipline, but it "seeks to re-inscribe and recode them" (Dean, 2010, p. 29). In other words, rather than new techniques replacing former ones, they shift, take new forms, or are directed toward different ends. As Rose (1999) stated, modern governmentality assumes that "to govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge

it and to utilize it for one's own objectives" (p. 4). This differs, or perhaps more accurately builds on Foucault's previous explorations of sovereignty and disciplinary power, where control and docility were desired outcomes, to show how modern government utilizes a range of technologies for subjects to conduct their own conduct and the conduct of others.

To elaborate on his framing of governmentality, Foucault (1982) stated that in modern governance, "power relations are rooted in the system of social networks" (p. 224), not exclusively in the institutions. Therefore, acting upon others is key for the modern art of government. As Foucault (1982) noted, "the forms and the specific situations of the government of men by one another in a given society are multiple; they are superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another" (p. 224). These forms of power relations "have been progressively governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions" (p. 224). Rose (1996) extended this thinking, arguing that in modern society, the art of government is made up of "complexes that connect up forces and institutions deemed 'political' with apparatuses that shape and manage individual and collective conduct in relation to norms and objectives but yet are constituted as 'non-political'" (p. 37-38). In short, the conduct of conduct is embedded within any number of institutions and relations, not just those normatively considered political, or of the State. This allows governmentality studies to engage in an analytic of government, which Dean (2010) described as examining "*how* we govern and are governed within different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate, and are transformed" (p. 33). Relying on these

analytics of government allows scholars to explore how the taken-for-granted ways of doing things are not entirely self-evident or necessary. Thus, by untangling them, governmentality studies show that government practices could be done differently.

As I have attempted to indicate, the art of government functions through practices of control *and* practices of the self–acknowledging both the larger population and the individual subject. Therefore, rather than conceiving of the state as a unified actor, Foucault analyzed the multiple operations and mechanisms of power and domination. Foucault (1978/2007) said the concern, in modern society, should not be the state's takeover of society but the "governmentalization" of the state. Here, it seems he is recognizing the ongoing process of the state becoming decentered as "simply one element...in multiple circuits of power...within a whole variety of complex assemblages" (Rose, 1999, p. 5). The art of government, broadly conceived, is accomplished through multiple actors and agencies rather than a centralized set of state apparatuses. This becomes a fruitful entry for exploring the many spaces where the subject is constituted–be it the social studies classroom or the digital spaces of social media platforms. In the context of this study, as I describe in Chapter 3, I asked participants to engage in a Q-sorting task. Thinking with Foucault's work allows me first to examine the practice of sorting the provided social media content as a behavior—the task itself regulated and shaped by particular power formations. But, secondly, it allows me to further attend to the discourses and logics functioning to inform the participants' choices through the task, as they were prompted to imagine their teaching practice. While this study does not offer insight into actual, enacted practices in the classroom, it gestures toward the connection between discursive formations and the possible practices associated with them.

Theorizing Social Media

In the previous chapter, I offered an overview of social media and reviewed some of the growing body of work examining these virtual spaces. In this section, I focus specifically on the relationship between social media and subjectification. Foucault's thinking and writing predate the internet age and the proliferation and ubiquity of social media, so he never explicitly explored subjectification online. This section, then, draws on more recent literature to explore how scholars have extended Foucault's work to theorize how social media works in relation to subjectivity. This section provides a broader context for the ways social media functions to contribute to the constitution of the subject, providing a big picture landscape for the various technologies and mechanisms at play. While my study does not directly examine these mechanisms, it is crucial to recognize the ways social media platforms are already working to afford and constrain particular ways of engaging with content online. Specifically, the design of these social media platforms regulates what content is most easily viewable and in what ways a user is likely to engage.

Being and Becoming Online

In Chapter 1, I highlight the ways much of the extant literature frames social media as spaces that afford and constrain various ways of behaving online. This framing allows me to build on Foucault's exploration of the subject to think about the continual process of being and becoming online. As previous scholarship has indicated, this process of subjectification online can occur through the subtle nudging of behavior online through various technologies of the self.

Governmentality through Social Media

Foucault (1983/1997) once said, “From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.” (p. 262). Because the subject is always in process, Foucault became interested in how the subject constitutes themselves—how people create themselves. Toward the end of his life, he examined technologies of the self, which he framed as the methods and techniques through which the subject defines and produces their self-understandings. These technologies of the self are the “specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves” (p. 224). As I have outlined, much of Foucault’s earlier work focused on various technologies of power and domination, attending to how macro forces of power make legible and normalize knowledge—the rules, ideas, beliefs, and “truth” in which people are immersed. His shift to technologies of the self allows me to further attend to how the consumption of this knowledge regulates one’s thoughts and practices. In a very general sense, technologies of the self can be regarded as the practices that aim to create particular dispositions to act correctly according to certain truths, governance, or rationalities.

As Foucault (1988/1997) said, “the encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self I call *governmentality*” (p. 225). This interplay between how individuals are governed, regulated, and normalized through larger systems and how individuals come to govern themselves through their everyday practices is significant in governmentality studies. Previous scholarship has explored how social media function as self-forming tools. For example, Abbas and Dervin’s (2009) edited volume offered a significant entry for mapping Foucault’s technologies of the self onto

the digital landscape. The volume investigates various ways digital "technologies enable the individual's self/selves to emerge publicly and to be worked upon" (p.2) with other social media users. This emerging body of work on self-forming tools continues to be extended and elaborated, looking at specific online practices in relation to the self. For example, Sauter (2014) examined how publishing status updates on Facebook functions as a tool of self-formation—a publicly accessible record and reflection on personal experiences, successes, failures, and faults. Sauter' work extends Foucault's (1997/1986) description of writing as a technique of the self, where the subject talks about and reveals oneself, engages with others, and presents and performs oneself to others, into the virtual practices of social media. Similarly, Petrina (2016) highlighted how sharing content online or applying various filters and frames to a profile picture serves as practices of subjectification. These kinds of actions on social media demonstrate how the subject comes to make sense of themselves. And, as Foucault demonstrated, all individual practices are informed by the larger technologies of power. This back and forth between the larger discourses and the individual practices is the focus of governmentality studies.

In the context of social media, governmentality requires attending to how certain practices *function* rather than what they might mean or represent. According to Dean (2010), it is essential "not to view regimes of governmental practices as expressions of values" (p. 45). Instead, it is more fruitful to question how the values "function in various governmental rationalities, what consequences they have in forms of political arguments, how they get attached to different techniques and so on" (p. 46). As such, in this study, I am not looking at the values or ethics of social media, but rather how those values and ethics function to form political subjects–subjects who conduct their conduct and the

conduct of others. Assessing the values and ethics, for example, of the corporate interests of these platforms, the profitability of personal data, or the refusal to regulate the circulation of various content on Facebook are beyond the scope of governmentality studies. Instead, these truths or practices of social media platforms function to position the subject to engage in these digital spaces in particular ways. As research has indicated, for example, the practices of social media function to curate particular echo chambers (e.g., Jacobsen et al., 2016), amplify fringe perspectives (e.g., Bliuc et al., 2018), and foster the wide circulation of misinformation and disinformation (e.g., Bennett and Steven, 2018; Marwick and Lewis, 2017). When thinking about social media as actors in the constitution of the political subject, then, such limited ways of engaging becoming increasingly significant, altering and potentially limiting the possible ways of understanding and making sense of the political landscape.

Conclusion

Foucault's work significantly informs my work in the remainder of this dissertation. Specifically, I think with his ideas of the subject and the myriad forces that shape subjectivity. In Chapter 3, I work to examine the ways Foucault's work can be engaged alongside traditional Q methodological work. I outline my vision for a poststructural Q method by aligning Foucault's work with the ways Q scholarship examines subjectivity. Chapter 4 employs a series of analyses on the collection of social media posts I used in this study. In this chapter, I examine the ways that these posts emerge through a specific set of online practices and formats and establish meaning for particular discursive formations. In Chapter 5 I consider the ways teachers engaged with the curated collection of social media posts and made sense of them as social media

users, drawing on discourses to react and respond. Then, in Chapter 6, I consider what happens when the participants shift to center their position as “teacher”, considering what discourses they draw upon to describe practices in the classroom. I interpret their descriptions and the imagined practices as bound and regulated by discourse. Finally, in Chapter 7, I reiterate the ways the relationships between the different subject positions—in particular between being a social media user and being a teacher—are messy, overlapping, contingent, and at times contradictory.

CHAPTER 3

EMPLOYING Q METHODOLOGY

When I started graduate school, I'm not sure I ever anticipated I would employ such a complicated and rigidly systematic methodological approach. The fact that the method includes any statistical elements would likely make many of my math teachers laugh. Although, I did become quite good at playing games like Brick and Snake on my TI-89 calculator in their classes. However, at just the right time I came across a tweet that said:

> *I look forward to a time when people consider their deep and wide reading to be rigor. Read more, read again, read diffractively, read against, then think, writing, think, write, and gently stitch together some meanings of your data; piece by piece, checking against your readings* [6]

This tweet so clearly spoke to how I engaged in this work. Occasionally, it was about reading and calculating and reading more. Other times it was reading and feeling insufficient to think and write. But the reading was and is central—notably including my reading of social media posts like this one.

I think in the process of following methodological protocols and working to ensure I was doing it "right", it was tempting to disregard the reading, the thinking, the engagement happening beyond the methodological literature. It was easier to check

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[6] Because the original poster of this tweet maintains a private account at the time of writing this, I have not included a link to the tweet.

boxes and follow steps. That is not to say there is no merit in methodological procedure—I certainly have not abandoned it. But so often I needed to slow down, to read, to think, to read texts through and against each other, to read my "data" through and against my readings. In my earnest to move through the process, I often failed to be in it. So, I found myself going back and (re)doing, (re)reading, (re)thinking—tearing sutures to mend it differently. This process, that so often gets tidied up and streamlined in the final product, was essential, was rigorous, and honors the disparate pieces that come together and informed the meaning making I constructed and continue to construct.

Q Methodology

To examine and name possible subject positions available to social studies teachers—based on available discourses and technologies—I employed Q methodology (hereafter referred to as "Q"). I have divided this chapter into three sections. First, I briefly outline Q's foundations and key tenets, highlighting the method's main features and aims. In the second section, I further explore the conceptualization of subjectivity within Q, holding it up to the Foucauldian articulations of subjectification outlined in the previous chapter to identify diffractive moments of conflict and alignment. I then conclude this chapter by turning to the specific elements of my enactment of Q method within this study, describing the participants and the social media posts included in the design and enactment of this project.

Q-Method

The meanings and understandings that individuals bring to a topic are central to Q methodology. By leveraging both the power of statistical procedures and explicit

explanations of a participant's decision making, Q brings together quantitative and qualitative approaches to illustrate the range of possible perspectives on a specific issue or topic, or what Watts and Stenner (2005) refer to as a qualiquantilogical approach. Q originated in the work of William Stephenson (1935), a trained physicist and psychologist. He postulated a new application of factor analysis where the relationship between variable and participant became inverted to consider what is afforded when individuals perform the measuring rather than being measured. Stephenson's (1936) critique primarily focused on what was lost in the standardization process associated with what he characterized as R methodological approaches, which were and continue to be commonly used in the field of psychology. R focuses on associations and differences between variables mapped at the population level (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In R, a survey instrument is distributed as a data collection tool, and then standard factor analysis techniques correlate the items in the survey. Through the process of standardizing scores to make comparisons, Stephenson argued the scores become disassociated with the individual and instead only associated with a statistical aggregate of scores. Stephenson (1936) argued the R methodological system "can tell us little or nothing about…any individual person. It supplies information of a general kind." (p. 201). Stephenson wanted a process that looked at individuals in a more holistic fashion rather than in relation to a population of people. He, therefore, offered a radical alternative when he proposed inverting the factor analysis so the individual person would become the variable and the completed test would function as the sample or population. Q analyses, or by-person factor analyses, then, are an "attempt to pursue correlations between persons, rather than correlations between tests or variables" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 12). Robbins (2005)

argued, "Q is less concerned with comparing patterns of opinion between groups than it is with determining what these patterns are, to begin with, and determining their structure within individual people" (p. 209). Stephenson, therefore, developed Q methodology as a study of subjectivity, in contrast to more traditional R methodologies that focus on the correlation of "objective" traits.

In R methodology, the data collected is considered objective—quantifiable scores of traits, capacities, or abilities that become standardized relative to the larger population. This data then allows researchers to make claims, with varying levels of certainty, about "specific bits of people" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 12). On the other hand, Q is designed to analyze subjective data, asking people to express how they understand a topic or an issue (Stainton Rogers, 1995). These subjective perspectives are collected through Q sorting or scaling a collection of items relative to one's viewpoint. The original intention of the method was to be able to make claims about whole aspects of individuals (Stephenson, 1936).

Since its emergence in the 1930s, the methodology has been utilized in a variety of fields—including psychology (e.g., Stephenson, 1968), political science (e.g., Brown, 1980), and more recently in human geography (e.g., Robbins & Krueger, 2000)—to investigate shared perspectives about a topic, identifying common relationships between individuals around dominant viewpoints. To accomplish this, the researcher starts with the *concourse*, or the common communicability or knowledge of any given topic (Stephenson, 1982). This includes the possible range of opinions and perspectives on the subject. Since the universe of communicability on any topic could be unlimited in theory, within the context of a study, the goal is to develop a representative sample, or the *Q set*,

of stimuli (e.g., statements, images, or videos) which are typically structured in terms of some conceptual framework.

Each participant then sorts and ranks the collection on a provided gradient (e.g., "most like how I think" to "least like how I think"). The forced rank and sorting of content, which results in a Q sort, invites more nuance and context than more traditional survey items. As opposed to simple yes-or-no scales, a Q sort works to capture a participant's current understandings and perspectives on a topic. The participant can decide what is "'meaningful' and hence what does (and what does not) have value and significant *from their perspective*" (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 74). Further, Brown (1980) argued that by forcing participants to sort the collection of stimuli preferentially, the researcher can make subjectivity "operant" and thus observable. Before further exploring the methodological approach, it is essential to consider how subjectivity is framed within the Q methodology literature, paying particular attention to any alignment with Foucauldian conceptions of subjectivity.

On Subjectivity

Many Q methodologists assert that a fundamental principle informing the methodology is subjective communicability, which assumes that "subjectivity is inherently expressive…it consists of an individual's subjective utterances" (McKeown and Thomas, 2013, p. 2). In other words, one's subjectivity is expressed in everyday exchanges and interactions. However, subjectivity-made-operant was Stephenson's (1953) way of responding to existing debates about objectivity versus subjectivity, where scientists tended to view subjectivity as "merely an indication of undependability, variability and the absence of 'constant relations.' The scientist is engaged in separating

what is dependable from what is unstable or variable, and 'subjectivity' is the name we give to the latter." (p. 88). Stephenson and many Q methodologists to follow, therefore, worked to explain how subjectivity (which in this case refers to perspectives and points of view) could be made observable through the behavioral practice of engaging with a Q sort. In order "for a Q sort to be considered a reflection of an individual's subjective position, we must assume that subjectivity, no matter how complexly constituted, is *operant*" (Robbins & Krueger, 2000, p. 642). An operant, which is rooted in the psychological tradition of behaviorism, is "produced and emitted naturally, without need for special training" (Watts, 2011, p. 39) and is "defined by the relationship it established with, and the *impact* it makes upon, the immediate environment" (p. 39). It rejects all references to the mind or consciousness to focus on behavior. Q is less interested in assigning intentionality or tracing lines to one's psychic inner world but instead aims to consider what is produced in the task itself.

This refusal to align a Q sort with the interiority of the subject is repeated across the Q literature. Many scholars have argued that a Q sort does not represent some introspective looking within but rather a way to express one's "subjectivity operantly" (Stephenson, 1968, p. 501). As such, one's subjectivity is not viewed as stable. A Q sort functions as a snapshot of behaviors that constitutes a person's current point of view rather than a representation or reflection of some internal *true* self. Brown (1980) reiterated this, stating:

> Fundamentally, a person's subjectivity is merely his own point of view. It is neither a trait nor a variable, nor is it fruitful to regard it as a tributary emanating

> from some subterranean stream of consciousness. It is pure behavior of the type we encounter during the normal course of the day. (p. 46).

Therefore, the items in the Q sort signify different things to different people. Further, the same person could sort differently under different conditions, at different moments (see Brown, 1970; Brown & Taylor, 1972; Brunner, 1977). The Q sort functions as an utterance—a one-time event—or what Foucault (1971/1972) refers to as *énoncés*, or statements. Brown (as cited in McKeown & Thomas, 2013) stated that "we must await the appearance of an utterance before reading a conclusion as to its meaning" (p. 5), eliminating *a priori* meanings and conditions advanced by the researchers. In this way, there are resonances with the poststructural project. For example, Wendy Stainton Rogers (1997), a British scholar and critical psychologist, has long argued for blending Foucauldian discourse analysis with Q methodological approaches. Specifically, she has argued that Q makes room to view subjectivity as "a convenient fiction, a device, no more, for making thinking easier," so Q becomes "a convenient technique for gaining access to the way ideas, arguments, explanations, and representations may be 'knowledged into being'" (p. 11). Watts and Stenner (2012) agreed, asserting Q is "capable of identifying the currently predominant *social viewpoints* and knowledge structures relative to a chosen subject matter" (p. 42). Because the individual subject can have no independent knowledge about the world, there is no line to trace to a fundamental truth. This approach, which scholars in the United Kingdom have taken up, recognizes that all knowledge is produced—it is *knowledged into being*—and therefore utilizes Q as a form of discourse analysis, which allows the researchers to gain insight into what knowledges are being produced. In a Foucauldian sense, then, "a participant's Q

sort was seen as an expression of their *subject position*, while the interpreted factors allowed the constructionist to understand and explicate the main *discourses* at work in the data" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 42).

Similarly, in the United States, the poststructural subject, as previously outlined, has emerged in Q research in the field of critical geography. Since its introduction to the field of human geography by Robbins and Krueger (2000), a body of work focused on "critical Q" has emerged (as outlined by Sneegas, 2020). This work rejects the positivist foundations of Q to "employ Q more critically by analyzing the results as the product of contextually contingent power relations" (p. 78). Sneegas (2020) advocated for employing critical discourse analysis with Q method to highlight gaps, silences, and contradictions that form in the process of sorting the items. Framing individual's subjectivity as "incompletely" and "tenuously" articulated (Jepson et al., 2012) or "performed" (Robbins, 2005), and only in relation to other individuals in a "sociocultural context" (Eden et al., 2005), critical geographers like Nost et al.(2019) have worked to modify the approach to more fully accommodate the understanding that subjectivity is not "a fixed and static category" (p. 25).

These kinds of engagements with Q, as presented in the fields of critical psychology and critical geography, offer a way to center the poststructural conception of the subject present in Foucault's work. Rather than remaining tethered to an essentialized subject, these scholars have further distanced themselves from the positivist foundations of statistical analyses to examine how particular discourses circulate in the practice of a Q-sort. Q method can help me identify possible subject positions—themselves made available by discourses—which the participants in a study might populate. Emergent

factors from Q analysis can help name the subject positions most readily accessed and consider the possible ways these teachers' imagined practices have been shaped and regulated by dominant discourses about teachers, political subjects, and social media users.

Research Design

As mentioned previously, Q methodological approaches look for patterns of understanding of a topic rather than the statistical prevalence of a particular viewpoint. The general aim is to "establish the existence of particular viewpoints and thereafter to understand, explicate and compare them" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 72). Q allows researchers to not only identify a range of subject positions but also why and how those subject positions may be emerging. In what follows, I outline six steps and processes associated with Q: Concourse development, identifying the Q set, identifying participants, collecting Q sorts, conducting factor analysis, and interpreting the factors. Then, because Q often fails to offer full descriptions of how the researcher interprets the factors, I present a more in-depth explanation of my qualitative analysis of the factors. Through this section, I intentionally continue to embed the language of Foucault's subject to make clear how I engage these ideas together.

Concourse Development

Rooted in Stephenson's (1978; 1986) concourse theory of subjective communicability, developing a concourse refers to the identifiable "universe of statements for [and about] any situation or context" (p. 44). A concourse of statements, opinions, or ideas about a topic can be endless and difficult to pin down. To be clear, Q method most commonly engages participants with a collection of written statements.

However, Q methodologists agree that any set of items—objects, statements, painting, musical selections, images, videos, words, and so on—can be ranked according to first-person perspectives (Brown, 1993; Stephenson, 1952; Watts & Stenner, 2012). In short, a "concourse is the very stuff of life" (Brown, 1993, p. 95). Most Q methodologists recognize that developing an exhaustive concourse of stimuli may not be possible. Therefore, this step aims to create a collection of stimuli broadly representative of the opinion domain and is often explicitly bound by the research question (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Developing a full concourse is often the most time-consuming part of the process. Compiling the concourse can take many forms (Brown, 1993). For example, some studies include items found across a literature base; others collect statements from a series of interviews or questionnaires. In whatever way the research develops the concourse, the primary focus is collecting a wide array of subjective perspectives—including outliers. In my view, this takes the form of collecting a range of utterances identifiable to a dominant discourse.

For this study, my concourse development began with my own engagement on social media, scrolling through my feeds, and becoming immersed in the ongoing and emerging dialogues following the death of George Floyd. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I focused on the Black Lives Matter movement given the urgency for pursuing racial justice as well as the ubiquity of the movement. Additionally, I began generating the concourse shortly after George Floyd's murder and thus conversations online were both prominent and unfolding. The timing of designing this project reiterated my decision to focus on the Black Lives Matter movement as an exemplary case of the ways content about political and social issues circulate online and are consumed by teachers. To be

clear, given the rapid pace with which social media content is created and shared, it is not feasible to capture the total corpus of posts around a given topic. Further, this concourse, and the resultant Q-set, are necessarily situated and partial. They are bounded by the accounts and platforms from which they were drawn and my choices as the researcher. While I could have focused and bound the concourse around a specific (set of) hashtag(s), I noticed that significant dialogues and responses to the Black Lives Matter movement were happening void of hashtags. Because many important viral posts did not feature hashtags, I worked to determine identifiable threads. In this study, a viral post was considered any social media content which garnered at least 15,000 engagements (in the form of likes, retweets, shared, and comments) and was posted by a user or an account with at least 200,000 followers. These allowed me to focus on accounts that were at least "mid-tier influencers," based on the categories advanced by Standard Terminology in Influencer Marketing (STIM). Mid-tier influencers are accounts with a reach of 50,000-500,000 followers (Mediakix, 2021). Many mid-range influencers aim for roughly a 2% engagement rate—meaning that 2% of their followers engage with the posts. I significantly increased the threshold for inclusion in this study and calculated a 7.5% engagement rate, requiring the post to have at least 15,000 engagements. To capture the most immediate responses to the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, the concourse also only included posts published online between May 26, 2020 and October 26, 2020. The concourse was also bound to the social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Q Set

After I developed the concourse, I worked to determine the Q set, or the collection of items participants would engage within the Q sorts. While there is no single correct way to generate the Q set, it is essential to tailor the collection to the research question. Stephenson (1952) recognized a wide range of reasons and ways a researcher can make decisions about the Q set. Brown (1980) argued it is "more an art than a science" (p. 186). Regardless of how these sets are made, they should not be questionably structured nor quickly assembled (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To accomplish this, Watts and Stenner recommend focusing on coverage and balance. Much like population sampling in a traditional R methodological study, in Q, the Q-set should be "broadly representative" of the concourse. Therefore, I aimed to cover the range of perspectives or opinions from the concourse. As a result, "a suitably balanced Q set will come very close to capturing the full gamut of possible opinion and perspective" (p. 58). The exact size of the final Q set is debatable. The standard seems to be somewhere between 40 and 80 items (Stainton Rogers, 1995), but the range of rich Q studies reveals these numbers are more of a guideline than a hard rule. I developed a Q set of 42 social media posts across the three distinct social media platforms, which, based on previous piloting of the project, proved to be a manageable number of posts for participants to review without being too demanding or unwieldy. To ensure coverage and balance, I created a systematic approach to examining each item in the concourse. With this two-step process, I first identified the partisan leanings of the account and/or the specific post.

I first went through each item in the concourse to determine the account's political orientation as either "right-leaning" or "left-leaning." Interpreting the political orientation

was an iterative process through which I consistently and systematically identified all accounts. To start, I looked at the account's published bio, or the description of the account generated by the user, to see if there were any partisan or political identifiers. For example, the Instagram account "@nastyfeminism" included the term "Leftist" in their bio, signaling an alignment and identification with progressive politics. While some accounts may have included veiled references to political parties, the majority of the accounts did not include specific terms or markers to sort them confidently. Therefore, I turned to Media Bias/Fact Check (mediabiasfactcheck.com), which rates various media sources according to political bias and factual accuracy, to search for each remaining account. I relied on Media Bias/Fact Check because it is an external entity for partisan identification that has been widely used in academic research (e.g., Clark, Schmeichel, & Garrett, 2021; Resnick et al., 2018; Baly et al., 2018). For example, Media Bias/Fact Check identifies Breitbart as an "extreme Right" page and Occupy Democrats as an "extreme Left" page. In some cases, an account's bio included an affiliation with a specific media source which I searched on Media Bias/Fact Check. For instance, the bio for the Instagram account "@Students4Trump" noted their chairman was Charlie Kirk, who Media Bias/Fact Check identifies as publishing "extreme Right" content. For any accounts run by a politician, I relied on Wikipedia, which lists the politician's partisan affiliation.

However, some accounts in the concourse did not explicitly align with a news media outlet or political party. For these accounts, I interpreted the partisan orientation and biases present in the extracted posts by comparing the views presented on the account

with the mission statement of the Black Lives Matter organization. The website for Black Lives Matter states, as a global organization, their mission is:

> to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.

I examined each post for its alignment with these goals. Specifically, I pulled key concepts from the mission statement to develop the following questions, which informed my interpretations:

> (1) Does the post confront white supremacy?
>
> (2) Does the post address violence inflicted on Black communities?
>
> (3) Does the post work to combat and counter acts of violence against Black communities?

These three questions highlight the systemic structure that maintains racism (white supremacy), the impact of that structure (systemic racial violence), and the need to address and respond to racial injustice. If these three questions were affirmed in my reading of the posts, I interpreted them as aligned with the Black Lives Matter organization. For example, many of the posts in the concourse explicitly used terms like "white privilege," "police violence," "white supremacy," "abolish the police," or "systemic oppression," which guided my interpretations. Because Media Bias/Fact Check rates Black Lives Matter Matter as politically Left given their alignment with the progressive Democratic platform, I interpreted these posts as containing a Left-leaning orientation.

While another researcher may have interpreted each of these posts differently, I developed a specific, consistent, and systematic approach for interpreting the political orientations of each post included in the concourse. These accounts may not explicitly claim allegiance to the organization. Still, by evaluating the posts in terms of their alignment with the Black Lives Matter mission statement, I consistently identified the political and/or partisan orientation of each post in relation to the ongoing dialogue around Black lives, police violence, and white supremacy in the United States.

Having identified the political perspective for each account, I then began a process of iterative analysis to organize the concourse posts further around three sub-topics. To ensure balanced and broad coverage of perspectives in the final Q-set, I wanted to attend to the topics covered in the concourse and the view presented in the posts. In this phase, I first organized the posts around three different sub-topics that captured the significant threads within the concourse: (1) the police and police funding, (2) protesting and/or civil unrest, and (3) the existence of racism and injustice toward Black communities in the United States. By grouping the concourse of posts around these sub-topics, I focused on a specific thread of the larger conversation to systematically identify the various perspectives in the concourse. In other words, these sub-topics allowed me to organize my analysis into smaller chunks. I went through all the posts to determine which of the identified sub-topics was the primary focus of each post in the concourse. While I provide a more in-depth analysis of each post included in the final Q-set in Chapter 4, I generally relied on each post's language and symbols to make these decisions. For example, I categorized posts that referenced police, police violence, the abolition of police and/or prisons, police funding, police reform, or showed images of uniformed

officers as focusing on (1) the police and police funding. I interpreted posts that used language or pictures of protests, looting, riots, destruction, or displayed images of signs at a protest as centering discussions around (2) protesting and/or civil unrest. Finally, I grouped posts that used terms like racism, Black lives, (dis)proportional impacts and/or injustices, neutrality in relation to racial justice, the presence or denial of historical and present racism, or the BLM organization specifically as focusing on (3) the existence of racism and injustice. While a few posts contained language and symbols across the three categories, I identified what I considered the prevailing or dominant focus of the posts. To determine the dominant focus, I considered the message as a whole instead of focusing on its individual parts. For example, if a post referenced police officers in relation to protesting, I focused on if the perspective being advanced in the post was directed toward policing or focused on the need for protest. In all cases, I found the predominant focus was easily identifiable.

After organizing the concourse according to the dominant sub-topic, I chose to create a list of possible perspectives on social media around Black lives, police, and the ongoing protests across the nation in the form of written statements. These perspective statements were informed by my own consumption of relevant social media posts, my time engaging with a range of social media accounts in developing the concourse of posts, and general media coverage of the ongoing unrest across the United States. The goal of crafting these statements was to develop a system for finalizing the Q-set from the larger concourse of posts around an identifiable collection of perspectives on police violence and the death of Black men and women. For instance, in thinking about narratives around civil unrest, I drafted statements like, “Protesting for Black Lives is

justified," "Protests should always be peaceful," or "Rioting in anti-American." In a traditional, statement-based Q sort, the Q-set is comprised of these kinds of written statements exclusively, so this process of drafting perspectives statements mirrored that of many conventional Q-sorts. I continually reviewed the drafted statements, looking to consolidate similar or repetitive perspectives or expand statements to accommodate additional nuance. This revision process ensured I crafted statements that were widely identifiable and allowed me to settle on ten statements for each sub-topic, resulting in 30 total statements. Focusing on only ten statements for each sub-topic was a pragmatic organizational choice. Having spent time analyzing a variety of social media posts presenting specific or niche messages through this process, I conceptualized these drafted statements as representing broader perspectives under which a post's specificity emerged. In other words, these ten statements served as "sub-groups" for each sub-topic into which I could further organize the concourse of posts as I worked to finalize a representative Q-set.

Having crafted these 30 statements, I sorted all of the collected social media posts into these various "sub-groups." I looked at the message of each post and paired it with its most closely aligned drafted statement until I had paired all the posts with one of the 30 statements. This process resulted in me assigning multiple posts to each statement. I then worked to finalize the Q-set by narrowing the collection to include no more than two posts from a single account and no more than two posts for each statement. I continually re-read each post to ensure broad coverage across these topics and social media accounts and a balance in partisan orientations and sub-topic. This iterative process allowed me to

finalize a Q-set of 42 posts[7], which included 14 posts for each sub-topic, 21 left-leaning posts and 21 right-leaning posts, and posts from 32 different social media accounts across Instagram (15 accounts), Facebook (6 accounts), and Twitter (11 accounts). The average number of followers for each of the accounts included in this final Q-set was 10 million followers. The average number of engagements per posts was about 264,000 engagements.

I recognize that I could have completed the process of finalizing the Q-set in any number of ways. As the researcher, I chose to interpret the messages of each post, draft a collection of statements I felt were representative of larger narratives around the national uprisings for racial justice, and then match the posts with these statements. I designed this structured approach to continually organize and group posts as I pursued broad coverage

[7] Relying on social media platforms as sites of research raise a range of ethical and legal considerations. While there are a growing number of resources to support researchers in making informed and ethical decisions for conducting and collecting data through social media, these decisions are messy and not conducive for clear or explicit guidelines. When designing this study, I referenced the Association of Internet Researchers' (franzke et al., 2019) ethical guidelines. While their guidelines informed my decisions, they did not fully address the ways I was including social media in my research. Further examination and discussion of how researchers rely on social media content for research remains an ongoing need. Based on my reading of the AoIR's guidelines, the various platforms' Terms of Service, and my own ethical commitments as a researcher, I relied on a two-tier justification for how I reference these 42 social media posts in this document. First, because all of the posts were collected from publicly available accounts with large, public followings, I have included specific references to the accounts. With an average follower count of 10 million users and thus widely familiar, I did not consider these accounts to be vulnerable populations, so I do not feel obliged to anonymize the accounts. As such, I will specifically reference the accounts in my analysis. Second, however, I have elected not to include any screenshots of the posts in this document. There are several reasons for this decision. One primary justification has to do with copyright concerns. Social media platforms grant ownership of user generated content to the user, so there are important considerations about who owns various social media posts and what protections and restrictions that raises for their use in research. However, many of the posters likely did not have ownership of the original photographs and images included in their posts and thus I want to also protect the rights of the original photographers and designers. Additionally, I wanted to recognize that some users may choose to delete certain posts I have included in this study. For these reasons, I have chosen to not embed the social media posts in this document. Instead, I have created Appendix D which includes details on each post as well as a live link to the post. This allows the platforms to continue to host the content per Terms of Service and should the user delete their account or the specific post, the link would no longer work. I recognize the absence of embedded screenshots of each post throughout the analysis may make reading and viewing the posts a bit more laborious (apologies to you, dear reader). However, I ultimately decided to prioritize making ethical decisions regarding social media users over making this document more reader friendly.

in the final Q-set. While I could have selected 42 posts from the concourse around a different set of criteria, I found this process to serve several beneficial purposes. First, continually looking at each post through the iterative steps was generative for my thinking and analysis of the posts and allowed me to remain fully immersed in the conversations taking place online. Additionally, the process allowed me to revisit each step—making modifications and adjustments when necessary. I attended to the unique features and multimodality of social media content to interpret how each post was tied up in larger discussions and perspectives. Finally, this process helped me move beyond selecting posts I liked or eliminating posts I didn't like to instead focus on the perspectives presented in the post and whether I had already captured that point of view in the Q-set.

Participants

Once I finalized the Q set, I identified a participant group, or P-set. Because in Q the participants function as the variables, only a relatively small sample of participants is required, but selecting them requires careful and considerate attention. The P-set should always be more "theoretical or dimensional than random or accidental" (Brown, 1980, p. 192). As such, the decisions of who and how many to include in a study are based on the nature of the research question—which variables are worth attending to in relation to the range of subject positions that may be available. Therefore, the P-set is determined through a priori grounds, based on who is expected to define a factor in the analysis. However, because "one quickly reaches the point where the testimony of great numbers of additional informants provides no further validation" (Benedict as cited in Brown, 1980, p. 194), the P-set does not require large, representative samples. According to

Brown (1993), the P set rarely exceeds 50. More specifically, many Q methodologists invert Kline's (1994) suggestion of a minimum ratio of two participants to every study variable for R methodological research. Many scholars aim to have two Q set items for every participant—or more clearly, a Q set should have twice as many items as participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Therefore, I aimed to recruit at least 21 teachers to agree to participate (including both inservice and preservice).

I distributed an invitation to participate through a series of listservs—one listserv for students currently enrolled in the university's preservice teacher education program, one for the recent graduates from the university's undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs, and one for teachers across the state who have served as mentor teachers to student teachers in the university certification programs. Additionally, teachers who received the email could share the invitation with any colleagues they felt may be interested. The invitation also noted that selected participants would receive a $25 Amazon gift card upon completing their Q sorts. The recruitment email included a link to complete an eligibility survey (via Qualtrics) that captured various demographic information I used to inform my P-Set. Specifically, I asked them about their social media use and habits, years of teaching experience, racial identity, gender identity, and self-professed partisan identity.

Additionally, they each completed an abbreviated version of Knowles's (2018) Civic Ideology Scale (CivID), which draws on the civic education research literature to "measure teachers' orientation to the civic education ideologies" (p. 81). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the full scale includes 27 items that characterize teachers as either "conservative," "liberal," or "critical" in their orientation to citizenship education.

According to Knowles, the conservative teacher "promotes a commitment to the traditions of the nation state and respect for its symbols" (p. 74), the liberal teacher "emphasizes individual rights to pursue different ways of life by promoting more pluralistic views of citizenship" (p. 74), and the critical teacher "focuses on limitations of human freedom by emphasizing the systematic oppression of various groups within society based on identity" (p. 74). To create a shortened, 15 item version of the scale, I relied on the factors presented in Knowles's study and selected the five highest loading items from each category. In other words, the shortened scale included the five items most strongly associated with the respective ideologies. Participants responded to the prompt "How strongly do you agree or disagree that good citizenship education primarily teaches…" where each item was on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree). I generated a score for each category by averaging their ranking for each item associated with the category. I recorded their highest average score as their CivID. If they had identical averages across more than one CivID category, I listed them as "multiple." I included the abridged version of the CivID scale I used in this study in Appendix A.

Thirty-one individuals fully completed the recruitment survey. I attempted to include additional participants to ensure a more balanced range of perspectives, trying to recruit more Right-leaning teachers, more teachers of color, and more teachers aligned with a conservative CivID. While purposive sampling is a widely accepted practice in the Q community (Watts & Stenner, 2012), I also recognize that identifying participants is an inherently subjective act (Sneegas, 2019). In other words, despite my efforts to expand recruitment, the study would inevitably be partial, bound by who the participants are, where the inclusion or absence of certain individual participants would undoubtedly alter

the composition of the emergent factors. Therefore, when recruitment stalled, I chose to invite all 31 individuals to participate in the study. Twenty-nine participants ultimately completed all the tasks for the study and comprised the final P-set. Table 1 provides an overview of the self-identified demographic information provided by each participant.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Sort #	Teaching Experience *	Racial Identity	Gender Identity	Partisanship	CivID Scale** (Knowles, 2018)
1	Experienced	White	Man	Moderate	Liberal
2	Experienced	White	Man	Left	Multiple
3	Novice	White	Woman	Left	Multiple
4	Preservice	White	Genderqueer	Left	Conservative
5	Preservice	White	Man	Left	Liberal
6	Preservice	White	Man	Left	Critical
7	Novice	Latinx	Woman	Left	Critical
8	Novice	White	Woman	Left	Liberal
9	Preservice	White	Man	Left	Critical
10	Preservice	White	Woman	Left	Liberal
11	Experienced	White	Woman	Left	Critical
12	Preservice	White	Man	Moderate	Conservative
13	Experienced	White	Woman	Right	Liberal
14	Preservice	White	Woman	Right	Critical
15	Novice	White	Man	Left	Multiple
16	Preservice	White	Woman	Right	Liberal
17	Preservice	Black	Woman	Left	Critical
18	Preservice	White	Woman	Right	Liberal
19	Experienced	Black	Man	Left	Multiple
20	Experienced	White	Man	Right	Liberal
21	Experienced	White	Woman	Left	Critical
22	Experienced	White	Woman	Moderate	Liberal
23	Novice	White	Woman	Left	Multiple
24	Preservice	White	Woman	Moderate	Liberal
25	Experienced	White	Man	Left	Critical
26	Preservice	White	Woman	Left	Multiple
27	Novice	White	Man	Left	Multiple
28	Novice	White	Man	Right	Liberal
29	Experienced	White	Man	Left	Liberal

* "Experienced" teachers were those with more than five years of teaching experience, "novice" teachers were those with less than five years of experience, and "preservice" refers to those teachers who were currently enrolled in a teacher certification program for social studies education.

** Participants were categorized as "multiple" if their responses to the scale items resulted in identical highest averages across multiple categories.

The P-set included ten experienced teachers who had taught for more than five years, seven novice teachers who had less than five years of experience, and twelve preservice teachers who were finishing their final semester of coursework before student teaching at the time of the study. Thirteen participants self-identified as men, Fifteen self-identified as women, and one participant self-identified as genderqueer. The P-set was overwhelmingly white (26 of the 29 participants), with two participants self-identifying as Black and one participant self-identifying as Latinx. To capture their partisanship, participants selected which label best described how they usually think of themselves: Republican, Democrat, Independent, or Other. If they selected Republican or Democrat, they noted how strongly they identified with the label. If they selected Independent or Other, they indicated with which party they tended to feel most similar. Because some of these participants did not readily identify themselves as a Republican or Democrat, I translated all participants to Left or Right, indicating toward which partisan position they leaned. For example, "Left" became a coverall term for participants who identified as a Democrat or an Independent leaning toward the Democratic party. Similarly, "Right" became a placeholder for those who identified as a Republican or an Independent leaning toward the Republican party. I labeled them "Moderate" if they said they were equally similar to both the Republican and Democratic parties. Like all definitive categories, these labels are limiting and fail to capture the range and nuance of political views and values. However, these labels carry weight and significance in the current landscape (e.g., McCarty, 2019; Theodoridis, 2017; Iyengar et al., 2012), and so they were significant in how I conceptualized partisan identity in this study. As seen in Table 1, 19 of the 29 participants identified as Left-leaning, four were labeled as moderate teachers, and six

identified as Right-leaning teachers. The majority of the participants (12 of the 29) aligned with a liberal orientation to civic education, eight were critically oriented, two were aligned with conservative civic education, and the remaining seven participants were aligned with multiple CivID labels.

Q Sorting

The collection of Q sorts requires each member of the P-set to engage with the Q-set through a forced sorting task. Whether with physical, printed cards, or on a virtual platform, participants order the items according to the condition of instruction, or the scale associated with the prompt (e.g., *most like me* to *least like me*, or *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*). Following the guidelines advanced by Brown (1980), these 42 posts were to be sorted by participants across a nine-point distribution (-4 to +4). I provided a grid with a steeper kurtosis, or slope, to better accommodate the complexity of these conversations (Brown, 1980) while allowing under-informed participants to sort most of the posts in the middle, more neutral spaces (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Table 2 shows the Q-sort field used for both Q-sorts.

While face-to-face sorting may have been preferable, I collected all Q-sorts virtually in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. VQMethod's web-based platform allowed participants to complete the Q sort on their own time and at their own pace in the safest of their own spaces. The platform provides a user-friendly interface for virtual sorting and organizing visual content (images and videos) and then generates reports that are extractable for analysis. These 29 teachers virtually sorted the items (via VQMethod version 1.01) according to two different conditions of instruction. First, they sorted the posts according to their own reactions (strongest reaction to weakest reaction)

Table 2
Q-Sort Field (42 items)

- 4	*- 3*	*- 2*	*- 1*	*0*	*+1*	*+2*	*+3*	*+4*
(2)	**(2)**						**(2)**	**(2)**
		(4)				**(4)**		
			(8)			**(8)**		
				(10)				

to capture their initial thoughts and responses to each post. Because I was interested in what elicited a participant's strongest reactions—regardless of whether they agreed or disagreed with the content—I instructed the participants to sort according to the absolute value of their reaction, where the posts that elicited the "strongest reactions" could be posts to which they reacted positively *or* negatively. In other words, I wasn't interested in identifying which posts garnered the strongest negative reaction and the strongest positive reaction. Instead, I wanted to know what kinds of posts elicited the strongest reactions from these teachers and how they described their relationship to those posts. However, my main priority was attending to any relationship between those reactions and their imagined teaching. To target this focus, I asked the participants to complete the sorting task again according to which posts they would most likely use or incorporate into

their classroom teaching. By sorting the items twice, I was able to explore the relationship between reacting and teaching and consider the kinds of social media posts teachers imagine being useful for their work in the classroom.

After completing both sorts, each participant answered a series of follow-up questions, which prompted them to elaborate on their decisions. The written submissions shaped my interpretations and analysis, as I will discuss in a later section. When Q sorts are conducted face to face, the participant can describe their decisions in the moment, and the researcher can ask clarifying questions throughout the sorting task. Because the participants completed their sorts virtually, I added the follow-up questions into the virtual platform to try and capture the participants' thinking as soon after their sorting as possible. These questions were, therefore, a part of the virtual sorting task, and both their completed Q sorts and their written responses to the follow-up questions were submitted simultaneously.

Factor Analysis

While Brown (1980) exhaustively reviewed and outlined the underlying mathematical formulas for each step of the factor analysis, most Q methodologists rely on online software to generate the factors. Brown (1993) argued that in Q, "the role of mathematics is quite subdued and serves primarily to prepare the data to reveal their structure" (p. 107). Nevertheless, the researcher must make several decisions about the emerging factors before interpretation can begin. In this study, I input the 29 Q sorts associated with each round of sorting into the KADE Q analysis software package (version 1.2.0), which allowed the sorts to be intercorrelated and put through by-person factor analysis.

In KADE, the software compiles the collection of Q sorts into a correlation matrix, where a perfect correlation is registered as a +1.00 and a perfect negative correlation is -1.00. These correlations identify levels of possible agreement across each Q sort. This "correlation matrix is simply a necessary way station and a condition through which the data must pass on the way to revealing their factor structure" (Brown, 1993, p. 110). Ultimately, most Q methodologists are primarily interested in the resulting factors. I generated the factors using centroid factor analysis. The emergent factors for each round were then initially rotated using varimax rotation to account for the most variance in the data. I then relied on judgmental rotation, or what Brown (1980) and Stephenson (1953) referred to as by-hand rotation. This allowed me to follow my hunches and adjust the axes according to my primary understandings of the sorts and participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Ultimately, my factor analysis generated three distinct factors for reacting to content online and three distinct factors for teaching with this content. The three factors for reacting to these posts accounted for a total of 35% of the study's variance. The three factors for teaching with these posts account for a total of 44% of the variance. Explained variance in the range of 35-40% or above is considered robust (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The participants' Q sorts for the respective conditions of instruction load onto these factors with various levels of significance. These factor loadings suggest "the extent to which each individual Q sort can be said to exemplify, or is typical of, the Factor" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 100). In other words, Q sorts that load onto a particular factor do so because the participant tended to sort the Q set of social media posts in a similar pattern to other participants associated with that factor. Therefore, all Q sorts loading

onto a factor might have reacted to the posts in similar ways and/or imagined using similar posts in their classrooms. As I will describe in the subsequent section, I interpret these various factors as subject positions available to teachers, recognizing these teachers' engagement with these posts as bound and regulated by discourse.

There are several tests used to establish significance when determining how many factors to extract. According to the Kaiser-Guttman criterion (Guttman, 1954; Kaiser, 1960), the analysis should only include factors with an eigenvalue of 1.00 or above. Another fairly simple parameter is that only factors with an explained variance of over five percent are considered statistically sound. All factors included in the final solutions met both of these guidelines. I further justified the inclusion of these factors by using Humphrey's rule (Brown, 1980), which indicates that each factor must have at least two significantly loading factors. To determine which sorts are significantly loading at the 0.01 probability level, Brown (1980) offered the formula $2.58(1 \div \sqrt{n})$, where n is the number of items in the sort. As such, individual sorts loading at ± 0.40 were considered significant. The cross-product of the two highest loading sorts for each factor (ignoring the sign) should exceed twice the standard error. I calculated the standard error as $1 \div \sqrt{n}$, which equals 0.15. Therefore, the cross product would need to exceed 0.30.

After determining which emergent factors were worth including for further analysis, I selected which individual sorts I wanted to flag for inclusion onto each factor. Because a loading of ± 0.40 was considered significant, I flagged any sort that met or exceeded this threshold for inclusion. Once I had selected the various sorts for inclusion or exclusion for the various factors, I completed the analysis in KADE, and the software generated a factor array for each factor. A *factor array* is a simplified average of all of

the sorts that were flagged for each factor. In other words, the software package averaged the location for each item on each of the individual sorts grouped together for a particular factor to generate an idealized sort for a hypothetical person who would fully embody the captured subject position of that factor. This factor array becomes the basis of the interpretation. Thus, how many factors the researcher includes and which sorts they load onto the factor significantly shapes what interpretations are possible. In other words, there is no one "right" way to generate the factors, but how the researcher makes these decisions significantly impact their analysis.

By relying on the ± 0.40 significance level, 25 of the 29 completed sorts loaded onto a factor when sorting based on their reactions (10 sorts onto Factor 1, 7 sorts onto Factor 2, and 8 sorts onto Factor 3). This included one confounded sort, which significantly loaded onto more than one factor (See Table 3 for all factor loadings). When I applied the ± 0.40 criteria to the second round of sorting, when participants ranked items based on which they would likely use in the classroom, 26 out of the 29 completed sorts loaded onto a factor (16 sorts onto Factor 1, 4 sorts onto Factor 2, and 6 sorts onto Factor 3). However, eight of those sorts were confounded (See Table 4 for all factor loadings).

Typically, in Q, confounded sorts are not included in the analysis and interpretation to prioritize cleaner factor arrays. However, much of the analysis process in Q methodological research returns to the question of what factors mean (Nost et al., 2019). The researcher gives meaning to factors and develops the narratives to describe complex subject positions. These guidelines I have outlined above are conventions rather than requirements. Ormerod (2017) noted that "Q methodologists prioritize theoretical

over statistical significance" (p. 81). Therefore, I believe the presence of confounded sorts offers a valuable illustration of the complex, hybrid subjectivities of participants. While each factor represents a possible, idealized subject position, an individual may draw on multiple, potentially contradictory discourses to inform their perspectives. As a researcher, these confounded sorts can help identify the ways discourses create various overlapping, hybrid subject positions.

Interpreting subject positions as inherently bounded categories runs counter to Foucault's work on the subject. To center the Foucauldian subject, I must take seriously the limits and risks of viewing subjectivity in overly arbitrary or reductionist ways. I draw on the example of Nost et al. (2019), who critiqued Q's "implicit assumption about subjectivity: that people predominantly express only one perspective" (p. 28). Therefore, they suggest that "retaining 'confounders' reminds us that people can articulate different priorities about the same topic at different times for different purposes" (p. 29). To be clear, I see value in tidily presenting bounded subject positions. However, by eliminating confounders, the emergent subject positions are unlikely to map neatly onto individuals and do little to reveal how these participating teachers react to and imagine teaching with the social media posts. Instead, I wanted to use Q in a way that could "show how all of us use different and often contradictory parts of our own hybrid subjectivities in different situations" (p. 30). As a result, I pursued a blended approach.

For each round of sorts, I ran the factor analysis in three different ways. I first ran it so that I excluded all confounders from the factors. I then reran it where I included confounded sorts to define *only* their highest loading factor (displayed in Table 3 and Table 4). Finally, I ran the analysis to use confounded sorts to define any factors onto

Table 3
Factor Loadings for Reaction Based Sort

Sort #	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	***0.41**	0.20	-0.02
2	0.22	0.27	0.35
3	0.38	***-0.50**	0.05
4	0.12	***0.57**	0.29
5	-0.02	0.19	****0.65**
6	***0.41**	-0.02	0.14
7	-0.06	****0.65**	0.12
8	***0.55**	-0.28	0.27
9	0.17	0.25	****0.55**
10	****0.66**	0.12	0.17
11	0.06	0.13	****0.50**
12	0.29	-0.08	***-0.52**
13	***0.63**	-0.44	0.19
14	0.14	-0.07	****0.72**
15	0.35	-0.27	***0.45**
16	0.20	****0.58**	-0.04
17	-0.18	****0.51**	0.11
18	***0.49**	-0.26	0.10
19	0.29	0.29	***0.50**
20	0.31	***-0.55**	-0.22
21	****0.66**	-0.03	0.03
22	0.37	0.02	0.05
23	***0.51**	-0.10	0.23
24	-0.07	***0.44**	0.26
25	-0.33	0.06	***0.41**
26	0.30	0.03	0.38
27	0.35	-0.27	0.26
28	****0.40**	-0.01	-0.26
29	****0.46**	-0.06	-0.08
% Explained Variance	14	10	11

* indicates sorts flagged for inclusion in the factor
** indicates sorts considered purely loading onto the factor, and thus, the corresponding qualitative data was weighted more heavily in analysis and interpretation

Table 4
Factor Loadings for Teaching Based Sort

Sort #	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 4
1	0.22	0.24	0.10
2	0.15	****0.47**	0.17
3	****0.81**	0.07	0.23
4	0.18	0.39	***0.59**
5	****0.52**	0.05	0.18
6	***0.68**	0.42	0.23
7	***0.46**	0.36	0.27
8	****0.66**	0.12	0.22
9	***0.56**	0.54	0.05
10	0.23	0.43	***0.64**
11	***0.54**	-0.05	0.45
12	0.40	***0.60**	0.17
13	***0.57**	0.03	0.51
14	0.45	0.17	***0.55**
15	0.28	0.31	0.34
16	***0.41**	0.31	0.15
17	0.17	0.13	****0.48**
18	0.07	0.20	0.03
19	0.15	****0.74**	0.16
20	***0.46**	0.22	0.04
21	***0.63**	0.13	0.43
22	0.30	***0.40**	0.03
23	****0.72**	0.23	0.26
24	****0.63**	0.28	0.18
25	****0.78**	-0.00	0.21
26	-0.02	0.31	****0.67**
27	0.11	-0.11	****0.51**
28	****0.59**	0.19	0.06
29	***0.42**	0.01	-0.16
% Explained Variance	23	10	11

* indicates sorts flagged for inclusion in the factor
** indicates sorts considered purely loading onto the factor. and thus, the corresponding qualitative data was weighted more heavily in analysis and interpretation

which they significantly loaded, meaning I could assign a single sort to define more than one factor. This blended approach allowed me to compare the idealized factor arrays, noting similarities and differences in these varied formations. For clarity, I primarily rely on the second round of analysis, where confounded sorts defined the factors with which they most closely aligned. When relevant, I will indicate when these comparisons were significant for my interpretation.

However, it is essential to note that by including confounders, the different factors can become significantly correlated to one another—suggesting a relationship across the different factors. In other words, including confounded sorts can reveal how these factors may be slightly varied manifestations of the same subject position. When I included the eight confounded sorts associated with the second round of sorting in my factor analysis, the three emergent factors were significantly correlated (each relationship exceeding the ± 0.40 threshold for significance). To attend to these correlations, I elected to conduct a second order factor analysis. To complete this second order factor analysis, I took the three factor arrays I generated based on the participants' second round of sorting (when the participants considered which posts they would use in the classroom). I ran another factor analysis in KADE Q using the three factor arrays as hypothetical sorts. My analysis in KADE generated a new factor array that invited me to examine what deeper, underlying discourse(s) might be causing participants to load onto more than one factor.

Interpretation

Lasswell (1948) highlighted the importance of the contextuality principle in analysis, noting that "the meaning of any detail depends on its relation to the whole context of which it is a part" (p. 215). Therefore, rather than focusing on specific items in

the factor arrays, the goal of interpreting the generated factors is to examine patterns of meaning within the broader context—particularly within existing or emerging theories. This invites an analysis of the ways ranging factor arrays may capture how specific discursive formations are taken up, and therefore the subject positions are made explicit. While interpretation remains the least explored and theorized phase of analysis, many scholars have offered guidelines. For example, Watts & Stenner (2012) argued that while cross-factor item comparisons are worth noting, more emphasis should be placed on the interrelationship of items within a particular factor. Interpretation should address why specific items were ranked higher or lower within a particular factor. This requires thinking through participants' justifications with existing or emerging theories. Such a process echoes Brown's (1980) assertion that "there is no set strategy for interpreting a factor structure; it depends foremost on what the investigator is trying to accomplish" (p. 247). Regardless of the process, in traditional Q studies, an interpretation of each factor is drafted into a coherent narrative.

Because Q is generally considered a mixed-method, most traditional Q studies collect qualitative data to support and supplement the factor analyses. For example, it is common for researchers to record participants as they sort the Q-set, inviting participants to narrate their choices. Additionally, Q methodologists typically conduct follow-up interviews with each participant where participants can elaborate on their decisions or answer any clarifying questions the researcher poses. These data then inform the researcher’s interpretation of the generated groups, in essence “triangulating” their hunches about the different groups with participant comments. However, Watts and Stenner (2012) argued that qualitative interpretation has been underexplored by Q

methodologists. Because much of the Q methodological literature focuses on and debates the decisions associated with factor analysis, the Q literature only loosely references or names the qualitative traditions used to interpret and analyze what the factors might mean. This under attention is, therefore, quite problematic. Sneegas (2020) noted the ways interpretative approaches deployed alongside Q are left hidden and underdeveloped in published studies. She makes a case for the use of critical discourse analysis within Q protocol in what she deems "Critical Q." I draw heavily from her work to make explicit the ways I engaged and interpreted the emergent factors. To remedy the persistent under attention to the qualitative analysis of these factors and to heed Sneegas's (2020) call to more transparently engage with how qualitative data is used, in this section, I describe the qualitative data I collected and how I relied on them to make my interpretations.

As previously mentioned, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, I collected all Q sorts virtually through an online platform. Because I could not record participants sorting the posts or talk with them live, I included a series of follow-up questions for each participant to type in answers after completing each round of sorts. These written responses were a significant source of qualitative data. After sorting all of the items, I first prompted each participant to explain why they selected the two posts sorted as their strongest reaction (+4) and the two posts they sorted as their weakest reaction (-4) in a digital text field. After submitting those answers, they were prompted to type responses to four additional questions:

1. Which posts stood out to you? What about them made them stand out?
2. How would you characterize posts that elicited a neutral reaction (those posts sorted in the middle)?

3. Did you tend to have stronger reactions to posts with which you agreed or disagreed? Explain why you think that is.
4. How did this collection of posts compare to those you have seen on your own feeds?

Similarly, after sorting the posts according to their likelihood of using them with students, they again explained why they selected the two posts they were most likely to use (+4) and least likely to use (-4) in the classroom, as well as providing typed responses to four follow up questions:

1. When thinking about your teaching, how did your decisions change? What stood out about this process?
2. What factors shaped your decisions on which posts you would be likely to use in a classroom?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between your own reactions to these posts (in the last Q-sort) and how you thought about teaching with them (in this Q-sort)?
4. What do you think is a teacher's role in how students make sense of social and political issues in their own social media feeds?

I wanted these questions to invite participants to elaborate on their thinking and capture some of the commentaries I would have been eliciting had we done the sorting tasks face to face. I intentionally posed open-ended questions to let them offer as much detail or insight as they were willing to share while also preventing them from giving short, one-word responses. Additionally, I wanted to be mindful of the amount of time they were dedicating to this study. As teachers and students navigating the increased demands and stresses of a pandemic, I recognized their time and energy were likely limited, so I limited myself to four questions after each sort. I acknowledge that the provided questions have significant implications for what kinds of responses were invited. The

limitations of any prompt and what kind of responses it invites are indicative of inherent limitations of what participants may have felt comfortable sharing during any interview given the power-laden relationship between researcher and participant.

Additionally, after I conducted my factor analyses of these two separate rounds of Q-sorts, I contacted the participants whose sort was (one of) the highest loading onto each emergent factor. These sorts were most aligned with the idealized factor arrays. As I interpreted these factors as possible subject positions, I felt these individuals may have more fully employed any relevant discourses or logics. In Q, the emergent factors represent groups of participants who sorted the Q-set into similar arrangements. In this study, I interpret the groups to have drawn upon similar discourses that informed and constrained their choices. Thus these readily available discourses may make certain subject positions available to these teachers. I, therefore, wanted to talk to the participants whose sorts most highly loaded onto each factor to try and unpack what was informing their responses. I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight different participants (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). During the interviews, they described why they made their decisions and their interpretation of the posts. Paired with the written responses to the post-sort questions from each participant, the transcripts from these eight interviews were an additional, rich source of qualitative data as I worked on naming and interpreting the various subject positions.

To begin my qualitative analysis of the emergent factors, I first relied on Watts and Stenner's (2012) crib-sheet method. This method "provides a wider system of organization for the interpretive process and encourages holism by forcing engagement with *every item* in a factor array" (p. 150). To construct a crib-sheet for each factor, I

recorded the items that distinguished each factor as well as the consensus statements across each factor. In other words, I looked for which posts were ranked higher or lower by one group than by the others. I also looked at which posts were commonly placed in similar spots on the Q field across the different groups. The crib sheets are available in Appendix C. These crib sheets gave me a foundational understanding of *how* the groups arranged the posts differently. I could then turn to the qualitative data to interpret *why* the posts were sorted differently across the groups.

By employing Q, the groups of teachers were predetermined through my statistical factor analysis. The prearrangement of these groups distinguishes what I did in this study from a more purely qualitative study which would have likely avoided premature grouping to instead look for themes across all the participants, for example. Nevertheless, the factor arrays I generated reveal very little about these groups of teachers, and thus my qualitative analysis more clearly defined and delineated distinctive threads within these groups. To accomplish this, I followed LeCompte's (2000) iterative process for qualitative analysis.

I first transcribed each of the one-on-one follow-up interviews for close reading (Mason, 2018). I then imported all of the participants' written responses to the post-sort questions along with the transcribed interviews into Dedoose (Version 8.3.45). Dedoose allowed me to easily and iteratively code all of the data, continually reviewing the participants' comments as I developed the codebook. I then grouped and categorized these initial codes as I worked to create a coherent taxonomy. For example, in the initial coding, I noted a range of ways the participants described posts. When reviewing these codes, descriptions of posts as a "meme," "colorful," "graphic," "art," or "visual," for

example, were grouped as “Mentioning Aesthetics.” I then analyzed these taxonomies for patterns as I looked at the responses from the participants comprising each of the prearranged groups. By looking across interview transcripts of the significantly loading sorts and the written responses from the other participants for each group, I was able to determine similarities in how they described their decision-making. The inductive analysis process (Bhattacharya, 2017) invited me to explore participant statements for "shared language" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 156). In short, I identified various discourses and logics I saw surfacing in their provided answers and thus could name possible subject positions these discourses make available to teachers.

Additionally, when drawing upon the qualitative data to develop narratives around each factor, I often started with comments made by participants who more "purely" loaded onto a single factor. A "purely loaded sort" was identified when the difference between the sort's highest loading factor and its second-highest loading factor was greater than twice the standard error (0.30). For example, Sort 5 in the Reaction Sorts loaded onto Factor 3 at 0.65. This means the constellation of views expressed by Factor 3 accounts for 65% of this participant's subjectivity about the topic of this Q sort. Their second-highest loading was onto Factor 2 at 0.19. The difference of 0.65 and 0.19 (0.65 - 0.19 = 0.46) and thus it exceeds twice the standard error (0.46 > 0.30). This sort was, therefore, one I looked at first when starting to write up my analysis. Simply stated, these more purely loaded factors were unlikely to be hybrid perspectives. All the responses collected and analyzed in this study were inevitably partial. Still, by starting with the purely loading factors, I attempted to develop my descriptions from the sorts which made each group distinct. In Chapters 5 and 6, I present my interpretation of each factor to

describe the subject positions and the most readily available discourses drawn upon by these teachers.

Correlations

As an additional component to my analysis, and again moving beyond traditional Q methodological approaches, I also conducted a series of Pearson correlations to explore the relationships between the emergent factors and various subject positions self-identified by participants. Because I am interested in whether a teacher's reactions to social media shape and inform their teaching, I first conducted a correlation between the first round of sorts and the second round of sorts—working to determine if relationship(s) exists between their reactions and their described teaching.

Additionally, in order to more clearly attend to the relationship(s) between consumption of social media, the participant's perceptions of social media content, and their teaching, I correlated my findings to Knowles's (2018) CivID scale. Knowles's scale measures a teacher's orientation to civic education, whether a "good" citizenship education should include conservative, liberal, or critical values. By correlating the factors emergent from this study with the CivID typologies, I explored the relationship between how a teacher thinks about civic education and how they react to civic-related content on social media. I also examined correlations between the factors and other provided demographic data. Specifically, I correlated the factors with the participants' gender, partisanship, and teaching experience years.

While Q does not traditionally return to R correlations, I think these relationships merit exploration. Of course, given the small participant size associated with Q, statistical correlations can sometimes be misleading. These quantitative results would need to be

replicated with a larger sample to clarify any identified relationships. Nevertheless, in the context of this study and the participant size of 29, I calculated statistical significance at $p<0.05$ to be any correlation with an R-score greater than ± 0.37. These correlations are explored and interpreted in Chapter 7.

Methodological Constraints

Having outlined how I employed Q methodology in my research design, I want to note a few limitations of the method. All methodological approaches afford and constrain how the researcher can collect, engage with, and interpret and analyze data. Q is no exception. I have outlined how I brought Foucauldian notions of the subject to the work of Q. As such, I noted that I interpreted the resultant factors as available subject positions. However, I think it is important to preface my analysis with a recognition that this methodological approach—which generates categories and labels—is at odds with the recognition that subject positions are inherently messy, complicated, and partial. In my analysis, I interpret the statistically generated factors as representing clusters of participants who drew upon a similar discourse to engage with and make sense of the social media posts. By interpreting these factors as possible subject positions I am not intending to offer concrete, predictive interpretations of how these teachers are likely to act or even that these teachers are likely to take up these subject positions. Subject positions are far more complicated than such neat categories and label may imply. Further, these participants were likely drawing on multiple, at times competing discourses. I interpret the factor analysis of Q as helping me identify the most prevalent discourse at work—not all of the discourses at work. Additionally, because of the procedural structure of the method, my analysis was bound by the ways these teachers

sorted the social media posts. Therefore, when I present a subject position, I am narrowly focusing on the most predominant discourse in their responses—not identifying all of the discourses these teachers might draw on to perform that subject position.

These teachers are drawing on discourses to offer responses and to engage with the Q-sorting task—but as an analytic schema, the subject positions I describe in my analysis are meant to make the complexity and nuance of the data clearer, rather than identifying or naming what actually happens in reality. As I noted in Chapter 2, Foucault recognized that the subject cannot meaningfully communicate outside of discourse and thus is subject *to* discourse. Further, the subject is the subject *of* discourse in that they put themself into a position from which discourse makes the most sense. Attending to this process—the process of subjectification—is messy and partial and always shifting.

In this study, these participants were drawing on discourses to communicate about how they react to content online and how they imagine teaching about that content. I then make the interpretative leap to propose how these teachers may become subjects *of* those discourses. Significantly, their responses were offered in one particular performance—as research participant—in one particular moment. The difficulty of this interpretive leap is thus confounded by the specific context of data collection. Nevertheless, I recognize that the discourses they draw on *could* shape the most readily available subject positions for these teachers—how these discourses may be shaping the performance of teacher. I do not aim to make definitive about how these teachers will behave when scrolling through their social media feeds or to predict what they might actually do in the social studies classroom. In other words, the subject positions offered through this analysis are convenient classifications more than tangible, material performances. For many reasons,

enacting a subject position is much more complicated and complex than how it is described in this dissertation. Still, the classifications offered in this study have value in that they highlight one possible way discourses function to afford and constrain particular ways of talking about engaging online and teaching about political and social issues through social media.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have begun to describe an emergent conceptualization of a poststructural Q. I have an ongoing interest in developing a vision for Q methodology that more intentionally aligns poststructural theories with Q's statistical and interpretative moves. I believe the work of Nost et al. (2019) and Sneegas (2020) in human geography has provided a significant groundwork for further embedding poststructural postulations of the subject into Q. Their work has significantly shaped and informed how I employed Q in this study. However, my use of multimodal social media posts in this Q study has also complicated my vision for a poststructural Q. I have come across no scholarship that employed Q with social media posts as the Q-set items. This study offers a glimpse at the affordances and challenges of the unprecedented approach of engaging participants with complex posts that combine visuals and text. I elaborate and make legible what a poststructural, multimodal Q might look like in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Introduction

Most researchers who employ Q-methodology develop Q-sets of written text statements. These statements are intended to make explicit a particular perspective and are compiled from a wider concourse of perspectives and viewpoints. Q methodologists working in a *constructivist* tradition seek to explore and identify personal viewpoints and knowledge structures through a participant's sorting of the provided statements (Watts & Stenner, 2012). However, Q methodologists drawing on *constructionist* traditions (e.g., Stainton Rogers, 1997) recognize language as neither stable nor static but rather as socially constructed. These scholars work to make sense of and name shared social meanings—what Dewey (1916/2009) labeled *social facts* or what Foucault (1972/1969) framed as *discourses*. In this approach, the researcher analyzes the collected Q-sorts as a form of discourse analysis, where the factor analysis illuminates the main discourses at work in the data. Rather than analyzing the statements comprising the Q-set for the pervasive discourses, this approach examines the meaning-making *after* the sorting has been completed by participants—looking at the emergent commonalities as indicative of shared interpretations and meaning-making. In some cases, the systematic steps employed to narrow the concourse to a representative Q-set invite the researcher to attend to what makes these statements identifiable to participants (in a particular context and

historical moment) and thus possible to sort. However, most Q methodologists, working to distance themselves from their R-methodological heritage, argue they should not pre-assign meaning or significance to the items. Participants should impose their own meanings. As Brown (1997) stated, "the supposed a priori meaning of the statements does not necessarily enter into the Q sorter's considerations: participants inject statements with their own understanding" (p. 11). Therefore, the items are "better thought of as *suggestions* rather than as statements with determinate meaning" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 64). Therefore, Q is intentional to center the participants' interpretations and meaning-making rather than overly centering the researcher's analysis of the items.

Rather than imposing rigid or fixed meanings onto the Q-set items, in what follows, I provide my own analysis of these multimodal social media posts. In the previous chapter, I outlined how I came to generate the Q-set. I highlighted how I developed inclusion criteria, categorized each account and post according to partisan rhetoric, and further sorted each item according to dominant sub-topics within the whole concourse. In this chapter, I present my analysis in two distinct ways. First, I attend to specific structural elements of the posts, which reflect typical features of social media posts more generally. Specifically, I draw on marketing literature to focus on the unique affordances of the platforms and their media to identify elements within the posts that function to predicate particular kinds of engagements. In short, I asked a series of questions to shape my analysis: How does the structure of the post shape the message? How is the visual nature of social media present within the post? How does this current and particular context and moment put a specific view into focus?

In the second section of this chapter, I identify some important and consistent discursive moves within the collection of posts. I describe how I turned to poststructural discourse analysis methods to attend more specifically to the language, symbols, and content of the Q-set items that function to produce distinct and identifiable points of view. The following questions shaped the analysis presented in the second section: What makes the post connect to the particular topic of interest? How might partisan perspectives be circulating within the post? What discursive moves make the post easily identifiable as containing a perspective as users scroll through their feeds?

In both of these sections, I highlight the ways the posts within the Q-set simultaneously convey identifiable meaning to viewers, while also acknowledging that the posts are limited in what they can present. While my analysis of some of the features and discourses within the Q-set could counter the interpretations offered by participants, which I present in Chapters 5 and 6, I argue these posts, and the messages embedded in each, require some preliminary analysis to identify signals that are present and absent across the Q-set. Therefore, the elements that participants attend to in their interpretations are just as informative as those overlooked or ignored.

Structural Functions of the Q-Set Items

Within social media marketing, scholars have examined a range of features in social media brand posts that elicit increased engagement among consumers. While this body of work aims to provide insight into effective marketing strategies for social media platforms, it generally highlights structural elements of posts that appeal to users across these virtual spaces. In their foundational work, De Vries et al. (2012) examine six features of social media brand posts to determine their impact on a post's popularity. In

their study, they consider a post's (1) Vividness, or "the extent to which a brand post stimulates the different senses" (p. 84); (2) Interactivity, which refers to the inclusion of interactive features, like links or polls; (3) Informativity, which indicates the amount of information provided; (4) Entertainment Value, or how posts are "perceived to be fun, exciting, cool, and flashy" (p. 85); (5) Position, which refers to how long a post remains at the top of a brand's page; and (6) Valence of Comments, or the impact of other user's positive, negative, or neutral comments on the post. These characteristics provide language for describing posts and allow me to engage in a rich interpretation of how the posts in the Q-set function. Other scholars (e.g., Ashley & Tuten, 2015) draw on marketing analyses from a pre-internet age (e.g., Aaker & Norris, 1982) to distinguish between a post's focus on either emotional appeals or more rational informational presentations. This distinction invites attention to the language and symbols employed in a post. I extend this work through my analysis by attending to additional features related to the structure and format of the post.

In what follows, I analyze crucial elements of the curated social media posts (see Appendix D for additional details on each post). I distinguish between image-based and text-based posts within the Q-set to focus on unique characteristics of each genre. I organize my analysis of the image-based posts around four distinct characteristics: photograph-based posts, traditional meme posts, aesthetic graphics, statistic-based posts. I then organize my analysis of the text-based posts based on typical Twitter posts and context-specific posts. I chose to reference posts that are examples for any of these six identified characteristics, and thus posts included in Appendix D are frequently referenced in multiple sections. I have also included a number (out of 42) in each post's

caption within my analysis which corresponds to the table in Appendix D and where links to the posts can be found. This number also indicates the order and sequence in which participants encountered the posts when completing their Q-sorts (i.e., Item 1 appeared first, Item 2 appeared second, Item 3 appeared third).

Image-Based Posts

This first section examines all the posts which I considered to be image-based, attending to how the different structures of these image-based posts function to position users for particular kinds of engagement. My analysis of these image-based posts within the Q-set attends to how the images function to elicit particular reactions from social media users. These image-based posts may include text, but the dominant mode of communication is through the visuals provided. De Vries et al. (2012) noted that images are considered more vivid than plain text. In their work, they argued that posts become more vivid at the become more dynamic. For instance, videos are more dynamic than images which are more dynamic than text. Because the Q-set did not include any videos or graphic interface format images (GIFs), the image-based posts are the most vivid Q-set items in this study.

Photograph Based Posts

The first type of image-based posts I explore is in this section are photograph based posts. Within the Q-set, I identified six of the 42 posts as including a compelling photograph (Item 5, Item 6, Item 12, Item 13, Item 21, and Item 29). A text-based caption accompanies the post's photograph in three of these posts (Item 5, Item 12, and Item 21). Specifically, the picture and the text exist separately in the post, allowing users to consume them independently. However, the two mediums often complement each other

to present a particular narrative. Each of these posts linked to an article or blog post on a different website in its original form. For example, in Item 12, the image served as a link to an article on Breitbart.com, which included comments from a Black state trooper on the growing movement started by Black athlete and activist Colin Kaepernick to kneel in protest. In this way, the image paired with a strategic headline of "I Only Kneel for God" functions as a form of "clickbait," where the photo and headline provide just enough information to pique a viewer's interest but not enough information to satisfy that interest. The curiosity of the user entices them to follow the link—increasing traffic and ad-revenue to the linked webpage[8].

I interpret the use of pictures to function in two ways. First, the inclusion of the photographs and their proportional prominence compared to the text draw upon cultural understandings that would be readily available to the post's viewers. Through familiarity with political leaders who have been in the news frequently as a result of their alignment with Trump (Item 5), through the pictures of the kinds of protest signs that would be easily recognizable as that type of sign (Item 6, Item 13, and Item 29), to the image that captured protest at an easily recognizable symbol of a sporting event– the pitcher's mound (Item 21)—the images used here would be familiar to the vast majority of viewers who would have the knowledge to understand the context pictured. That kind of familiarity aids interpretation as the viewer tries to decode the message in the post.

[8]As mentioned, the posts which included an embedded link to a separate website, video, or news article (Item 3, Item 5, Item 12, Item 21, and Item 38) were photoshopped so participants would only attend to what was visible on the post during the Q sort. I did not want participants' sorts to be influenced by what they could not access. Therefore, I modified Items 5, 12, and 21 to become photograph-based posts, where the photo accompanies a short blurb of text.

Secondly, a photograph's inclusion can function as evidence or elaboration of any claims made in the post. For many, the presence of a picture suggests authenticity or objectivity. For example, in Item 21, by providing a photograph with the post, a user may see the stencil of "BLM" on a baseball mound and decide with confidence that Major League Baseball (MLB), as an organization, had taken a stance in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Similarly, Item 6, Item 13, and Item 29 show photographs of protest signs. These photographs were posted on their respective accounts in the months following the murder of George Floyd and the national uprisings that resulted, however there is no way to confirm someone took these photographs during protests following George Floyd's death. Protests against racial injustice and police violence have been ongoing and widely documented in the United States, so someone could have taken these photographs at any number of demonstrations, in any number of moments. While there may be evidence the photo was taken around the time of George Floyd's death, users can always call into question the authenticity of a picture in an era of Photoshop and digitally modified photographs. However, because social media platforms heavily feature photos for standalone consumption and because these signs of protest remain relevant and discursively familiar, it is unlikely users would automatically question their authenticity, which is often a marker of credibility when assessing images. Significantly, however, photos are neither inherently authentic nor objective. Instead, they are produced by a photographer with particular aims and then curated as a social media post. In short, no photograph can provide the full context of a moment, situation, or experience. Nevertheless, social media posts are limited in how much information and context they

can provide—thus photographs become one way to offer as much information as possible for quick consumption.

Traditional Meme Posts

In the Q-set, eight of 42 posts relied on the traditional meme structure. While the genre of a digital "meme" has a long history, with a range of provided definitions, in this study, I borrow Knobel and Lankshear's (2007) framing, who described a meme as "a particular idea presented as a written text, image, language 'move', or some other unit of cultural stuff" (p. 202). Similarly, Shifman (2013) noted that "memes may best be understood as cultural information that passes along from person to person, yet gradually scales into a share social phenomenon" (p. 364-365). These definitions remain broad and, therefore, could include any number of social media posts. However, they both highlight the ways "memes are pop culture artifacts [and that] they can provide insight into how 'everyday' media texts intertwine with public discourses" (Milner, 2012, p. 9). Drawing on Dawkin's (1976) concept of memes as a biological phenomenon shaping cultural jumps in human evolutions, some scholars emphasize the ways memes get mimicked and remixed—where users produce, consume, and reproduce variations of a form for rapid diffusion. For my analysis, I am less interested in how these posts get remixed and instead think more broadly about memes as a genre of posts that users can identify and categorize. In this study, the overlaying of text onto an image or photograph signifies what I describe as a "traditional meme" format—where the integration of image and text functions to tell a joke, make an observation, or advance an argument (Milner, 2012). Therefore, these produced texts are recognizable by others and shared and disseminated across social media platforms. Further, like the photograph-based posts, the images

included in these memes are also void of context and, therefore, are susceptible to users' same ranging (mis)interpretations. Nevertheless, the intended perspective is made even more explicit in meme form, combining text and image into one medium to communicate particular positions and views informed by the public discourses around Black lives, police, and public protest. Rather than being posted and consumed separately, the text and image are intentionally combined into a single unit for consumption and interpretation.

I identified eight posts as the traditional memes in the Q-set (Item 7, Item 10, Item 30, Item 34, and Item 41). As an increasingly familiar genre and easily recognizable design commonly used for humor and entertainment, the traditional meme format could elicit increased skepticism of any claims or arguments advanced. So, while these posts present identifiable perspectives that connect to larger social discourses, they also bear clear(er) indications of production. Thus the production and construction of the post may be more apparent than in a photograph presented without super imposed commentary.

Item 7, Item 10, Item 30, Item 34, and Item 41 exemplify the traditional meme. In each of these posts, the text is brief, accommodating a quick reading and interpretation. The user can make rapid assessments of the post's perspective or partisan orientation, requiring minimal analysis. A significant feature of these memes is that the quickly identifiable message would not be as readily apparent without the image—in this way, the text is inseparable from the meme. For example, Item 10, Item 34, and Item 41 each include the definite article "this" to refer to the concept or topic discussed in the post. Without the image, the reference is lost and, thus, uninterpretable. Similarly, Item 7 and Item 30 reference specific features of the picture. Without the photograph in Item 7, it

would be unknown which three men are being referenced or their differing positions. In this way, these memes must be consumed and interpreted as a whole (rather than distinct and separate parts).

Side by Side Images. Within this genre, I have identified a sub-set of memes which rely on pairing two or more images and placing them side by side (Item 30, Item 34, Item 41, and Item 42). While many of these posts still follow the traditional meme format of text superimposed onto an image, the added characteristic of side-by-side pictures is worthy of consideration. The presence of two photographs next to each other is used in these posts to compare two moments, two experiences, or two dissonant ideas. For example, in Item 42, the side-by-side shows a photograph of a white appearing woman holding a sign that reads "I want a haircut" above a Black appearing woman holding a sign that reads "I want my boys and men to live." Within the current social and political context of the United States, it seems the white woman is protesting restrictions put in place in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, while the Black woman is protesting the ongoing murder of Black boys and men at the arms of police officers. This post may invite users to consider the differing priorities of the white woman and the Black woman featured in the post, contrasting the desire for a haircut against the desire for life. In this way, these posts offer a way to show contrast.

In Item 34, the side-by-side meme contrasts the peaceful protesting tactics associated with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with images of looting and burning buildings. The post critiques protesters who cause destruction while valuing the peaceful protesting of King. A function of side-by-side photos is that they highlight contrast rather than similarities. By emphasizing the differences, Item 34 denies any similarities between the

protests of the Civil Rights Movement and the current demonstrations responding to racial injustices. In other words, Item 34 simplifies the historical and contemporary moments of protest to imply there is no overlap or similarity.

In Item 41 and Item 30, rather than highlighting a contrast, the side-by-side structure highlights a parallel. Item 41, which Black, professional Basketball player Lebron James posted, notes a similarity between Colin Kaepernick's kneeling and the officer kneeling on George Floyd's neck. The parallel shows the relationship between police violence and the murder of Black lives with the movement of peaceful kneeling started by Kaepernick. Item 30, which the Right-leaning account For America shared, establishes a parallel between the "few bad apples" who are racists within an otherwise good and just police force and the "few bad apples" who incite violence, destruction, or looting during otherwise peaceful protests. This kind of contrast is less about presenting opposing views and more focused on showing relationships and connections.

Aesthetic Graphic Posts

I characterize these posts as aesthetic graphic posts because they feature engaging and appealing designs. In this section, I draw on the idea of aesthetic and graphical images to more precisely characterize posts that were created and designed to be visually pleasing. The use of aesthetic graphics functions to make the content and its message aesthetic and thus more palatable for consumption. Additionally, seven posts included in the Q-set feature digitally render art rather than captured photographs (Item 4, Item 9, Item 18, Item 25, Item 27, Item 31, and Item 39). As such, these posts function differently by presenting content in more visually engaging ways. For example, Item 9 and Item 25 feature (almost) exclusively written text. However, they were graphically

designed as a more stylized, artistic expression of that text. In this way, they function more similarly to image-based posts than to text-based posts. Item 39 functions as an infographic, where information—in this case on proposed policy changes proposed to decrease police violence through the campaign #8CantWait—is presented visually for quick and precise consumption. Item 4, Item 18, Item 27, and Item 31 also rely on aesthetic graphics to (re)present information. A vital feature of these posts is their design elements. In each of these posts, information is synthesized into a visual representation. For example, Item 31 shows a series of illustrated and racialized hands representing the meaning of "Black Lives Matter" in response to a misunderstanding that the statement implies superiority. Item 27, in a similar way, relies on aesthetic graphics to stylistically map where policing policy changes have occurred following the murder of George Floyd and campaigns like #8CantWait. Item 4 visually compares the "share of U.S. population" to the "share of deaths per million" from fatal police shootings through the use of racialized segments of a graphic. Item 18 also visually presents statistical information on the demographics of crime for easy consumption. This kind of graphic organization of data shifts the modality to present information into a more visual and easily consumed form.

Statistic-Based Posts

The statistic-based posts include quantifiable information—most commonly in the form of percentages. As mentioned, many of these posts overlap with those identified as aesthetic graphic posts. I consider Item 4, Item 18, Item 27, Item 32, and Item 39 to be statistic-based. Although Item 32 is a text-based post and would not be characterized as

an image-based post, it shares many characteristics of how these posts function, and so I included it in my analysis of these image-based, statistic-based posts.

Generally, the inclusion of quantifiable or statistical information is commonly associated with validity, objectivity, and fact (e.g., Henke et al., 2020; Koetsenruijter & Willem, 2011; McConway, 2015. The notion that numbers do not lie exemplifies the weight often given to the presence of quantities and percentages. Because these posts each include quantifiable data, users may quickly interpret them as unbiased and factual and thus worthy of engagement. Each post provides what could be considered concrete evidence that supports claims and assertions around Black lives and police. Significantly, data can be manipulated and easily presented in misleading ways. So, while these posts may be interpreted as carrying particular credibility or validity, critically attending to the provided information and sourcing remains essential, as well as to the information or context that is left out.

Text-Based Posts

In this section, I examine the posts which primarily relied on text to communicate a perspective or position. Without social cues or embodiment evidenced in pictures, text-based posts draw on a different set of structural elements to facilitate meaning-making. I draw on De Vries et al.'s (2012) description of interactivity to analyze these posts. In their work, interactivity refers to the ways the posts can invite users to engage. For example, some social media posts will ask users to "like", "share", or "comment" on a post. Other posts may utilize platform features like tagging, linking, or including hashtags. In this way, the text-based posts within the Q-set feature layers of interactivity. I first examine "Tweet Formatted" posts, paying specific attention to the function of

hashtags, account tagging, retweets, text-only tweets, and the role of screenshots posted on other platforms. I then shift to discuss "Context-Specific" text-based posts.

Tweet Formatted Posts

As a micro-blogging site, Twitter users most commonly structured their posts as a brief (a maximum of 280 characters in a single tweet), text-based message. While any account can link a series of tweets together to create a thread, the Q-set items primarily focused on a single tweet—disregarding any replies or subsequent tweets by the poster. As such, the poster's message is constrained by word count. Each of the tweets included in the Q-set was posted by a verified account, represented by the blue verified badge located next to the user's name. Verification of an account indicates the poster is who they claim to be and implies they are a notable or recognizable figure of public interest. As a result, even if a user is unfamiliar with the account owner, the blue verified badge may provide the account and their tweets a level of legitimacy.

Hashtag Inclusion. Various features on sites like Twitter offer different functionality and interactivity. One such feature is the use of hashtags, which originated on Twitter to tag topics of interest. This prominent feature, which all social media platforms have now embedded, relies on using the # symbol followed by a word or phrase. The created hashtags then function as metadata tags to facilitate content retrieval. As the use of hashtags has evolved with the platforms, they operate in multiple and overlapping ways. Item 3, Item 15, Item 19, Item 24, and Item 36 are examples of hashtag use in the Q-set. For example, some users may use Twitter's search engine to find tweets about a topic of interest. By searching "#GeorgeFloyd," a user may discover Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's tweet (Item 36). Therefore, Ocasio-Cortez's

inclusion of the hashtag makes her posts more searchable and opens the possibility of a wider audience. Alternatively, the hashtag can function as a highlighting device (Scott, 2015). For example, the string of hashtags in Colin Kaepernick's tweet (Item 19) could work to draw attention to ongoing public discussions around Breonna Taylor and calls to abolish the police, inviting users to read more or interact with the discussions further. Because the hashtags are hyperlinks, a user can click on the hashtag to see other relevant posts using the same tag. Similarly, this highlighting function also may allow users to categorize and contextualize the post. For example, both Item 3 and Item 15 include "#BackTheBlue." The use of this hashtag, which functions to support and stand behind police officers, clarifies any intended implication or message. It quickly and efficiently highlights a particular narrative. However, the context provided in the rest of the tweet remains essential. Notably, Item 24 signals a critique of the included hashtag—calling into question the implications of #DefundThePolice. In this way, the inclusion of a hashtag most generally functions to ensure a tweet is included and situated within a more extensive dialogue—whether in support or opposition.

Account Tagging. While not overly prominent in the Q-set, one tweet relied on the use of account tagging. For example, the tweet featured in Item 38 links the post to @NYTimes, *The New York Times'* official account. Tagging accounts can function in a range of ways. One common way tagging functions is to indicate a user is replying to another user. Tagging can also invite users to view the tagged account by following the link. Users can then either support or critique that account. In this case, by linking to the profile, Secretary Pompeo seems to be calling out the news organization for offering a "disturbed reading of history" in their *1619 Project* (Hannah-Jones et al, 2019). Users

reading his tweet could follow the tag to craft their own critical tweets to the newspaper. Further, any replies to Pompeo's tweet would tag both his handle, @SecPompeo, as well as that of *The New York Times*, @NYTimes, by default. The newspaper would, therefore, be notified of all replies to Pompeo's tweet. In this way, the use of the tag pulls additional accounts into the conversation.

Retweet Structure. Retweeting is a common feature of Twitter, where users can reshare a post to their followers. In some cases, users "quote retweet," where they add their own commentary, response, or contribute to the tweet they are resharing. In both Item 15 and Item 28, the users are quote retweeting other posts. In Item 15, Senator Ted Cruz retweeted a post by the New York Police Department that shows officers' sustained injuries. The retweet structure allowed Cruz to amplify the original post and offer support to the officers. Conservative commentator Ben Shapiro also quote retweeted a post from California governor Gavin Newsom (Item 28). Shapiro expressed disagreement with the original post, relying on the retweeting structure to contextualize what he is responding to and critiquing. In this form, the quote retweet functions as a sort of public reply to another tweet.

Context-Specific Posts

Social media platforms create a flexible and unpredictable temporal structure. A post on most social media platforms is "persistent-by-default" (boyd, 2010, p. 46), meaning it remains available indefinitely unless the user deletes their post. As a result, "a reader may see a [post] a few seconds after it is posted, or they may come across it days, weeks or even years later" (Scott, 2015, p. 11). boyd (2010) noted that "what sticks around may lose its essence when consumed outside of the context in which it was

created" (p. 46). Therefore, I frame Item 2, Item 8, Item 11, Item 17, Item 19, Item 33, Item 36, and Item 37 as context-specific. By attending to the date posted, these posts seem to be responding to a specific, contextualized moment. However, because users can consume these posts at any date and time—and in the context of this study, participants were engaging with these posts often several months after the post was initially published online—the meaning, intent, or impact could shift. For example, Item 19 shows a tweet published on September 23, 2020, which was the day the grand jury of Kentucky failed to indict any officers with the murder of Breonna Taylor. Within this context, Kaepernick's tweet functions as an inditement of a system rooted in white supremacy that failed to keep Breonna Taylor safe. However, reading the tweet months after the initial post and the grand jury announcement could make the tweet's intense tone feel out-of-context or even an overly harsh assessment. Similarly, in Item 8, Candace Owens seemingly defends the grand jury decision and thus frames any critiques of the U.S. justice system as a form of domestic terrorism. These two posts are, therefore, responding to current, contextualized events.

To conclude this analysis of the structural features of each post, I want to recognize that organizing and categorizing the posts in this way has several limitations. Most importantly, I acknowledge that the ways users interpret image-based posts and text-based posts may be different. The elements that may inform and shape how viewers interpret an image-based post may also inform their interpretation of a text-based post and vice versa. However, I argue that any feature or structural element could be functioning in any of the posts—not just those included in a particular category. Further, these features often shape how viewers interact with and make meaning of a post.

Additionally, these categories offered a way to systematically examine a few key features across the Q-set, recognizing neither the outlined features nor the posts included as examples within each category are likely to be exhaustive. Nevertheless, this analysis of the structural features underexplores the ways language functioned in each post. Therefore in this next section, I attend specifically to the discursive formations features in the Q-set.

Discursive Functions of the Q-Set

Employing Discourse Analysis

Scholars using a Foucauldian perspective of discourse recognize discourse as a productive force. As I described in Chapter 2, according to Foucault, discourses produce meaning and subjectivity, dictating what is possible to think or know or to be. Discourse here is both material and productive, constructing ways of knowing and being, shaping realities, and giving form to what become commonsensical notions. Discourse analysis informed by Foucault's work, then, aims to analyze how language plays a role in creating and sustaining particular ways of thinking and being while obscuring others. Discourse analysis is "concerned, in particular, with unraveling taken-for-granted constructions" (Schmeichel, 2015, p. 4). As a method, discourse analysis takes seriously Foucault's commitment to disrupting and unpacking taken-for-granted assumptions about the world to expose how discourses maintain particular power relations. In so doing, discourse analysis can unsettle the belief that the current reality is inevitable. As MacLure (2003) noted, discourse analysis is about loosening "the naturalness or inevitability of identities, values, and concepts, thus showing the workings of power and material interests in the most seemingly innocent of texts" (p. 9), or what Luke (1995) described as attempting to

"disarticulate" the texts of everyday like (p. 20). This task requires the researcher to simultaneously attend to the specific language used in a text and the broader contexts in which that text emerged (MacLure, 2003). Schmidt (2010) described this approach as "pay[ing] attention to contexts as a way of understanding particular words and phrases through culture, political, and historical meanings as it affects the consumption of the text" (p. 316). Rather than "burrowing" into discourse to unearth meaning, Threadgold (2000) asserts that the discourse analyst should ask "just how is it possible to know that, to think that, to say that" (p. 49).

Several scholars employing discourse analysis methodologies have begun to consider new demands for analyzing social media content. In particular, social media content requires additional considerations. While context is always important for discourse analysis, social media platforms present a new interactive context—muddying the lines between producer and consumer, "user-generated" and "official" content (Unger et al., 2016). KhosraviNik (2020) advanced what he terms "social media critical discourse studies." He argued conducting a discourse analysis of social media content must unpack the discourses by also considering the platforms' unique digital practices and dynamics—rather than just employing traditional discourse methodological approaches on texts that just happen to be on the Internet. However, KhosraviNik and Unger (2016) also argued that researchers should "not treat digitally-mediated texts as part of a 'virtual' world that is separate from the physical world and 'reality,' despite acknowledging that digitally-mediated contexts have specific features that may affect our analyses." (p. 216). Therefore, conducting a discourse analysis with social media posts

requires simultaneous attention to the unique functions and affordances of social media's virtual spaces and the social and political contexts circulating offline.

Additionally, the medium of social media content is often multimodal, including a combination of visual and text data (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). A growing number of scholars have advanced multimodal discourse analysis methods (e.g., Van Leeuwen, 2015). Recognizing the multimodality of social media content is about noting that:

> The affordances of different modes … have profound effects on that which is to be realized in the mode. This is the insight gained from the "linguistic turn" of the 1970s which showed that language was not a neutral vehicle for representation. All modes have that effect. Knowledge changes in shape when it is realized in the different modal material. (Kress, 2003, p. 50)

This quotation emphasizes the way visuals, for example, produce meaning and knowledge in different ways than written text. Van Leeuwen (2015) offered the example of "data visualization," where "documents that used to take the form of densely printed pages now make abundant use of typography, color, and layout" (p. 450). The increasingly visual nature of information requires the analyst to understand how text and visuals function differently. However, this is not only about translating written texts into new or different visual texts. The medium of many social media posts also demands attention to how the different modalities of a social media post—the language and visuals—operate as a coherent whole (Ledin and Machin, 2018).

Having provided a framework for how I am conceptualizing and engaging discourse analysis methodologies, I offer my analysis. The structural features of these social media posts I have outlined are significant because they open up new ways of

engaging with and consuming the messages embedded. The interplay between the visuals, the connective features of social media platforms, and the decoding users employ when scrolling through their social media feeds produces ways of making sense of and responding to the social and political landscape. However, as scholars have highlighted, these features are not separate from the language and discursive formations embedded within the text of these posts (Van Leeuwen, 2015). The language within these posts connects to larger logics and discourses. I argue these discourses become more digestible and more easily dispersed through the format and features of social media. However, in making these discourses readily digestible for quick consumption, complexity is eliminated. In this section, I analyze the language included in the posts to name the discourses at work. I emphasize how the language included in the posts works to produce and disseminate particular meanings that influence social and political life particularly around over simplified binary oppositions.

Binary Oppositions

MacLure (2003) emphasized the ways binary oppositions function in everyday life. She uses the example of describing someone as a "freedom fighter" versus a "terrorist," noting that the words selected to describe this person or a group of people "invest the speaker or writing with moral and political allegiances" (p. 9). The oppositional structure of these two terms situates the subject within a particular moral universe or defines a particular identity—for example, as a hero or villain. By relying on binary oppositions, meaning and knowledge are produced, where one comes to meaning "through its *difference* with respect to a (constructed) 'other' which is always lacking" (p. 10). In other words, the discursive moves create in-group and out-group distinctions

imbued with claims of moral superiority, virtue, or rational logic. In this section, I highlight three ways binary oppositions surfaced in the Q-set: Us versus Them framing, Pro versus Anti Police Sentiments, and Protester versus Rioter distinctions.

Us versus Them Framing

The social media posts included in the Q-set featured an "us versus them" binary. The language in this group of posts established in-group/out-group distinctions through the use of subject pronouns like "we" and "they," as well as possessive adjectives like "our, "your." These kinds of "us versus them" framings were common through the Q-set (see Item 8, Item 11, Item 17, Item 22, Item 26, Item 28, Item 30, and Item 38).

In most of these posts, the two distinct groups were not explicitly named or defined. Instead, they remained implied through the use of language and images. In this way, the us versus them framing often functioned to distance or separate the author of the posts from a described group. For example, a tweet by Candace Owens (Item 8) states, "Black Lives Matter does not care about facts. They seek to riot and loot and are now holding America under siege." She explicitly names the Black Lives Matter organization, later referred to the organization as domestic terrorists. The language she uses significantly positions Black Lives Matter in negative terms—uninterested in facts, holding a country under siege and acting as terrorists. In establishing the out-group (through the use of "they"), Owens's message also includes an implied in-group—in this case, a group that cares about facts and is presumably more peaceful. Her use of language and the evocation of a more fact-based, peaceful "other" functions to villainize the Black Lives Matter organization and its associated movement.

Similarly, Secretary Pompeo's tweet about the *1619 Project* functions to otherize the *New York Times* and its publication of the *1619 Project*. By saying that the *1619 Project* "wants you to believe our country was founded for human bondage," Pompeo invites the reader of the tweet ("you") into a shared in-group ("our"). This invitation functions to distance the reader, himself, and the United States from what he characterizes as "a disturbed reading of history." By invoking the entire country, his tweet forces a narrative of a unified perspective in opposition to the *1619 Project* and positions the *1619 Project* as un-American. The authors of these kinds of posts create in-groups to distance themselves from what they are framing as a problematic "other." It positions readers to either align themselves with the in-group or to be outside, and thus problematic.

Some of the other social media posts in this group function slightly differently, using us versus them framing to highlight a proposed affinity group rather than an out-group from whom they are distancing themselves. For example, the Facebook post by Occupy Democrats (Item 22) presenting superimposed text on a photograph of a Black soldier consistently uses "we" to reference Black Americans. In this case, the "we" seems to highlight a subsection of a larger group—distinguishing Black Americans as a distinct group of Americans. This rhetorical move functions to emphasize the resilience and contributions of Black Americans in response to larger discourses circulating in the U.S. about respecting the country or the American flag. The post ends by saying, "Don't talk to US about honoring 🇺🇸". The whole phase works together—including the emphasis on "us" typed in all caps—to imply Black Americans have a long history of honoring the U.S., invalidating critiques of Black Americans who express their frustration with the

U.S.'s long history of not honoring them. The language, therefore, relies on an us versus them distinction while honoring Black Americans as an affinity group.

Pro-Police vs. Anti-Police Sentiments

A prevalent theme across the Q-set focused on police funding and police support. By using binary oppositions, many of the social media posts functioned to mobilize support for defunding or abolishing the police force or for supporting the police force. Binary thinking around Black lives and the police often circulates widely in society—positioning support of Black life in opposition to support of policing and vice versa. This binary assumption is present in many posts (Item 1, Item 3, Item 13, Item 15, Item 24, Item 32, Item 33, Item 35, Item 36, and Item 40). However, it is worth noting that many of these posts establish a shared identity before engaging with pro versus anti-police sentiments. For instance, Larry Elder's tweet (Item 24), Dan Crenshaw's Instagram post (Item 35), and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's tweet (Item 36) each reference a universal collective that wants to address issues of racial injustice. Crenshaw says "everyone" wants to address police brutality. Ocasio-Cortez and Elder use "we" presumably to reference the American people looking to respond to issues of police brutality. By prefacing the binary oppositions within a shared understanding or identity functions to appeal to readers. This appeal to a shared or common understanding reflects discourses of bipartisanship and "working across the aisle" that signal a shared commitment to addressing an identified problem. This discursive move in these posts can disrupt the deeply entrenched binary of Black lives versus police by stating that everyone agrees police brutality is a problem. However, all of the posts in this group then present a stance on *how* the U.S. should address police brutality. Some of these posts call

into question the logic of proposed policy changes (e.g., Item 3 and Item 24) or critique sweeping calls for reformation or abolition of the police to address what they characterize as an anomaly in the police force (e.g., Item 32 and Item 35). Some of the other posts in this group highlight the systemic nature of police violence, calling for a radical reimagining of policing in the U.S. (Item 1, Item 33 Item 36, and Item 40).

These posts collectively signal two distinct positions on police funding by raising either a critique of the police force or a critique of the proposed responses to police brutality. In other words, this binary oppositions denies the complexity of police violence, police funding, and how to address the persistent disproportionate and extrajudicial shootings of Black people. This kind of binary logic in these posts suggests that to recognize racial injustice requires a commitment to defunding or abolishing the police. Conversely, if one supports law enforcement, they must deny the injustice of the ongoing racial violence in the policing. The binary language and the short form nature of social media posts therefore eliminate complexity and nuance to conversations arounds policing—positioning viewers to pick a side.

Protest vs. Riot Distinctions

Another significant binary opposition present in these posts involves how the posts characterize the uprisings and unrest in response to racial injustice. Most prominently, several of the posts in the Q-set worked to discredit the ongoing protest by labeling them as destruction, riots, terrorism, or criminal (Item 2, Item 10, Item 23, Item 34, and Item 37). For example, Charlie Kirk's tweet (Item 37) calls into question the moral credibility of anyone who causes destruction in response to injustice. Dan Crenshaw offered similar critiques in his Instagram post (Item 2), saying there is no

justification for "violent and destruction action." Additionally, as I mentioned in previous sections, the Instagram post by @turningpointusa (Item 34) contrasts the protests of the Civil Rights Movement to the destruction of more recent protests following the murder of George Floyd. By characterizing the actions of recent uprisings as "a crime," there is a presumed appropriate or legitimate way to protest. Displaying Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a group of fellow protesters peacefully marching suggests their actions were appropriate and in stark contrast to the destruction and looting displayed in the more recent photographs. However, this post oversimplifies both movements—denying the acts of violence and destruction that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement and mischaracterizing the current protests by only highlighting isolated acts of destruction and looting. In short, this post creates a false binary—of protests as either wholly peaceful or wholly destructive. Further, by relying on a binary logic of protest—as either justifiable and appropriate or not—these posts invite readers to assume all contemporary demonstrations become violent, to dismiss or overlook the reason protests are happening in the first place, and to establish a moral high ground that associates criminal and violent protest with an inferior "other."

Racialized Language

When examining how the Black Lives Matter movement and the demands for racial justice are engaged on social media, it is vital to attend to the ways language is used to signal race. While the vast majority of the posts in the Q-set refer to race explicitly—referring to Black and white people, for example—some of the posts reference race more subtle. In this section, I offer a few examples of the ways these posts

signal race more subtly (Item 6, Item 7, Item 12, Item 15, Item 19, Item 20, Item 26, and Item 29).

How the post references the underlying cause of police violence and racial injustice is significant. For instance, naming "racism" functions differently than naming "white supremacy." Often, when racism is invoked, it operates at an individual level. A police officer may be racist—possessing personal discriminatory beliefs about Black people. White supremacy refers to the institutionalization of racism—the well-supported and reinforced system that maintains and perpetuates oppression. Both Colin Kaepernick's tweet (Item 19) and the Instagram post by @the_female_lead (Item 20) named white supremacy as the system operating in the United States and the institution of the police force. Naming white supremacy as a problem may disrupt the white viewer's capacity to absolve themselves of responsibility for benefitting from racist processes and structures. Instead, by identifying white supremacy, all white participants in the system can be implicated for upholding these institutions. However, it is also important to note that white supremacy has an inflammatory quality that can have a significant impact on how readers engage with these social media posts. Claims of white supremacy can potentially leave a reader more rattled compared to allegations of individual racism. White supremacy implicates everyone in a nefarious system, recognizing the ways systems and structures throughout society have privileged white folks and oppressed people of color. References to racism, on the other hand, can function to implicate only those who hold bigoted or problematic views of others. Growing critiques of critical race theory in the U.S. and attempts to outlaw any curricular examinations of white supremacy are perhaps indicative of the pervasive resistance to white people being implicated in

systemic and structural oppression. It may be easier to agree that racism is a problem in society when the racist is someone else.

In some of the other posts, racialized language becomes coded. For example, Ted Nugent's Facebook post (Item 7) alludes to race through the colorblind myth of meritocracy. By drawing on discourses of personal responsibility, colorblindness, and meritocracy, Nugent's post implies that race is not a factor in the opportunities available to people in the U.S.—saying "color doesn't define your future." Paired with the image of three Black men in different circumstances, the text of the post functions to deny systems that constrain choices for many Black Americans or that white supremacy is institutionalized into the justice system. Instead, the message of the post places the responsibility on individuals. Other coded racialized language appears in the Instagram post by Donald Trump (Item 26). Language can be used in a variety of ways to activate racial thinking without explicitly referencing race (e.g., Valentino et al., 2002). The use of "Law & Order" has a significant history of connotating crime with Black and Brown people and signaling the ongoing repression of Black people (e.g., Waxman, 2020). In this way, Trump's post invokes images of Black and Brown protesters who need to be controlled by the police.

Conclusion

The social media posts in this Q-set reify the binary logics around racial injustice that are common in the United States, eliminating space for hybrid positions or middle ground. These posts reinscribe polarizing discourses by positioning the reader to accept either/or, us/them posturing. Significantly, underlying many of these binary oppositions are assumed partisan lines—positioning the Left versus the Right. That is not to say that

all Republicans oppose the Black Lives Matter movement or that all Democrats support defunding the police. However, the function of language in many of these social media posts often promote such oversimplified distinctions and position viewers of these posts to accept, adopt, and embody these partisan binaries. In short, social media posts are not conducive for the messy gray area of political life. Social media content, with its limited format, drains the complexity of all issues. Recognizing the elimination of complexity and nuance on social media is significant given the growing role of social media in people's lives and the ways people increasingly rely on social media to learn about social and political issues.

CHAPTER 5

REACTING TO BLACK LIVES MATTER ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Introduction

As described in Chapter 3, the analysis of each factor is a holistic process, where I examine all of the items within the factor array, how the items relate to each other, and how the sorting of the social media posts relate to the ways they were sorted in the other factors produced in the study. In this chapter, I provide an in-depth narrative representation of each factor as it relates to reacting to Black Lives Matter on social media. I named and interpreted these factors, which I frame as possible subject positions available to teachers, by examining the idealized factor arrays generated in my factor analysis (see Appendix E for the Factor Arrays) in tandem with my qualitative analysis of the participants' descriptions of how and why they made their decisions. The three factor arrays were created by averaging the sorts that loaded onto each factor. This process of averaging the sorts resulted in a composite sort that a hypothetical person who perfectly embodies the described subject position would complete. In other words, in this chapter, I am naming and presenting these idealized subject positions, which are partially and messily shared, to some degree, by the participants who significantly load onto that factor[9]. A higher factor loading suggests a higher degree of similarity between the idealized subject position presented in this chapter and the individual participant's

[9] Statistical significance at the 0.01 probability level was calculated as any factor loading greater or equal to ± 0.40.

described perspective. If a participant were to load onto a factor at 1.0, it would suggest they are in perfect agreement with the idealized subject position, placing every item exactly as it occurs in the composite factor array. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I relied on the comments, descriptions, and written responses from participants who loaded onto a given factor to untangle and surface the aspects of each participants' reactions that relate to the particular subject position described. Notably, the subject positions described in this chapter are convenient analytic schemas rather than representations of real performances.

I recognize that the teachers who participated in this study relied on available discourses to construct their responses. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I do not believe the participating teachers constructed meaning of these social media posts on their own, out of nowhere, nor are the meanings of the posts static or universally understood. Instead, discourse constitutes knowledge, social practices, subjectivities, and power relations—discourse defines and produces the objects of our knowledge (Foucault, 1972/1969). The participants' interpretations, meaning making, and reactions to these posts—their knowledge of these posts—were informed and shaped by available discourses. These discourses are productive in that they always function to position subjects. As Foucault noted, the subject is produced within discourse and is therefore subjected to discourse. In this chapter, I interpret these subject positions as emergent from broader discourses that function to shape subjects and their reactions online. Consequently, the subject positions I describe in this study reveal more about the discourses available to the participants—as social media users, as teachers, as people living in the current socio-political ecology of the United States, etc.—than the behaviors these participants may adopt. How the

participating teachers described their reactions in this study might not neatly map onto how they would react in the moment while scrolling on their social media feeds. Nevertheless, there is value in examining the possible subject positions these teachers may take up when engaging online.

Before presenting my interpretation, I want to reiterate the three different rounds of factor analysis I conducted with this collection of sorts described in Chapter 3 to clarify how I addressed confounded sorts in this chapter. To account for the distinctions and overlap across the analyzed subject positions, I elected to conduct an iterative analysis of the factors. I first completed my factor analysis by excluding the confounded sorts, then I repeated the analysis where I included the confounded sorts only on their highest loading factor, and finally, I repeated the analysis, including the confounded sorts on *any* factor onto which they significantly loaded. This iterative analysis resulted in three different sets of factor arrays, which allowed me to examine what changed when I included the confounded sorts. When reviewing the reaction-based sorts, the inclusion and exclusion of the one confounded sort (Sort 13) resulted in minimal to no differences in the generated factor arrays. The inclusion of this sort produced subtle differences to the first factor array only, where twelve of the forty-two posts associated with the first subject position shifted positions by $\pm$ one column on the factor array (e.g., moved from a +2 position to a +1 position). The factor arrays associated with the two other subject positions did not change when I included Sort 13. In my view, these differences were so subtle that they did not shift my interpretation or analysis. As such, in this chapter, I rely exclusively on the factor arrays generated during my second round of analysis (Appendix E), where I flagged the confounded sort to load onto only its highest loading factor.

Reacting Online

In the following sections, I present my analysis of how the participating teachers reacted to the provided social media posts. To develop the narratives of these three idealized subject positions and inform my analysis, I drew heavily on quotations from individual participants. As mentioned in Chapter 3, participants submitted written responses to a series of post-sorting questions. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the participant whose sort was the highest loading onto each factor. Following any quotations from these data sources, I included the participants' factor loading to give a sense of their overall similarity to the subject position on offer. For example, "R1=0.66" suggests that the participant's sort correlated with the first reaction-based factor (R1) at 0.66. Additionally, an asterisk (*) following the factor loading identifies participants who are more purely loaded onto that factor. I considered the participant's sort "pure" when the difference between the sort's highest loading factor and its second-highest loading factor was greater than twice the standard error (0.30). Throughout the chapter, I will also use phrases like "sorted higher" to reference posts that elicited stronger reactions (ranked at +2, +3, or +4) and phrases like "ranked lower" to indicate posts that elicited weaker reactions (ranked at -2, -3, or -4). I consider neutral items to be the posts that participants sorted into the -1, 0, or +1 columns of the Q sorting grid.

My factor analysis generated three distinct groups, and I employed qualitative analysis to determine what subject position each group might occupy. I provide the demographics of the participants who loaded onto each factor in Table 5. The first subject position was that of the *Curious Consolidator*, who reacted most strongly to posts that

included substantive content or content that made them think about the topic and their current views in new or more complex ways. The second was the *Dismissive Scroller*, who was annoyed by "predictable," "expected," or "performative" posts, preferring novel, more critical takes on the topic. The third was the *Angered Constituent*, who consistently reacted most strongly to posts by political figures. After the narrative interpretations, I conclude this chapter by discussing what patterns of convergences and divergence emerged when I compared the different factors and their interpretations. I also pay particular attention to how the participants' political subjectivity functioned to shape the reactions to the social media posts described by the participating teachers.

Table 5
Participant Demographics by Reaction Factor

Characteristics	R1: Curious Consolidator	R2: Dismissive Scroller	R3: Angered Constituent
N	10	7	8
Eigenvalue	4.55	3.81	1.79
Study Variance	16%	13%	6%
Gender	6 women 4 men	1 genderqueer 5 women 1 man	2 women 6 men
Race/Ethnicity	10 white	1 Latinx 1 Black 5 white	1 Black 7 white
Teaching Experience	3 Preservice 3 New 4 Experienced	4 Preservice 2 New 1 Experienced	4 Preservice 1 New 3 Experienced
Partisanship	6 Left-Leaning 1 Moderate 3 Right-Leaning	4 Left-Leaning 1 Moderate 2 Right-Leaning	6 Left-Leaning 1 Moderate 1 Right-Leaning
CivID Orientation	2 Critical 7 Liberal 1 Multiple	2 Critical 3 Liberal 1 Conservative 1 Multiple	4 Critical 1 Liberal 1 Conservative 2 Multiple

I preface my analysis by foregrounding the messiness of my interpretation. I want to continually disrupt any interpretative clarity implied by listing the thresholds for statistical significance or quantifying various aspects of my analysis. Subjectivity is not so neatly categorized and is often elusive and muddy. By describing these three subject positions, I risk oversimplifying the messy complexity of these participants into three rigid, exclusive groups. That is not my intention. I highlight a few key limitations to my analysis to emphasize the difficulty—if not impossibility—of pinning down the subject. Like any study, my analysis was first limited by the data I collected. While the participants often offered robust descriptions of how they made decisions, in most cases, they referred to the posts broadly—rather than identifying specific posts. In response, I worked to pair the participants' broad categorizations of the posts with the organization of the posts on the factor arrays. While I remain confident in my interpretation of the data, it is possible the participants were thinking of different posts when making generalizations about certain kinds of social media posts. Additionally, I recognize that while I present three subject positions as distinct and separate from one another, there is always the possibility of hybrid positions. The presence of confounded sorts reiterates this possibility. I offer some description of hybridity that emerged in my analysis. However, these hybrid subject positions were under captured in my data and would require additional data for analysis. Thirdly, when describing the named subject positions in my analysis I tend to frame actions, decisions, or justifications in somewhat definitive terms. I recognize that this framing risks overlooking the variation and messiness of any subject position, instead presenting something that may seem concrete, fixed, or conclusive. I do this because I am describing an *idealized* subject positions—not making

claims about actual performances or subject positions of the participating teachers. In other words, I describe the "Curious Consolidator", "Dismissive Scroller", or "Angered Constituent" in definitive terms to emphasize that these subject positions are idealized—not material or wholly taken up by any of the participating teachers. Despite these limitations and the inherent messiness of this work, there is value in tracing possible subject positions—considering how these teachers *might* take up various positions when engaging with political social media content and what discursive formations *may* be informing these reactions. I offer my interpretation, fully recognizing and embracing the muddiness of how these participating teachers described their responses to these social media posts.

The Curious Consolidator

The *Curious Consolidator* reacted to informative and substantive content online, reacting most strongly to posts that provided meaningful content and context. Because the Curious Consolidator was concerned about substantive context, they characterized posts that garnered weaker reactions as containing perspectives that lacked sufficient context and offered no substantive argument or claim. Notably, the Curious Consolidator's political subjectivity informed their interpretation of context, substance, and credibility. While the Curious Consolidator proclaimed an open and curious posture, in actuality, they justified their reactions in subtle but clearly politically informed ways—therefore working to consolidate and strengthen their current views.

Crafting Affinities

A prominent theme for the Curious Consolidator was an increased engagement with what they characterized as informative posts. As one participant noted, "the posts

that stood out to me were the ones that made me think rather than told me how to think…They all just made me sit and think about them rather than just moving on to the next [posts].” The teacher went on to elaborate on this point, writing:

> I tended to have stronger reactions to posts I agreed with because many of them made me think deeper or see something in a new way that I hadn’t thought of before. The ones that I disagreed with did cause strong reactions in some cases, but for the most part, I think I’m just so used to people saying uninformed and ignorant comments that they no longer cause me to react as much (R1=0.41).

This notion of wanting to think in new or more profound ways about the embedded topics was common in the comments offered by the participants loading onto this factor. Similarly, posts considered “uninformed” or “ignorant” were less engaging. Another participant said, “posts that actually had substance or something to say were the ones that engaged me most” (R1=0.55). Significantly, the Curious Consolidator characterized posts as substantive when they aligned with their views. Six of the ten teachers in this group identified as Left-leaning and thus reacted to and agreed with Left-leaning content online (See Appendix C for the crib sheets showing the relative rankings). Of the ten teachers who significantly loaded onto this factor, eight stated they reacted most strongly to posts with which they agreed. Out of the fifteen posts that elicited stronger reactions than in the other factors, fourteen were Left-leaning. Similarly, all but one of the twelve posts eliciting weaker reactions than in other factors were Right-leaning. Significantly, this relationship between their reactions and their political subjectivity existed despite this group’s continual claims of being open and curious about opposing views.

In many ways, the participants' perception of alignment is significant. For instance, by reacting strongly to posts they agreed with, the Curious Consolidator may reflect the ways the digital landscape can exacerbate the impacts of echo chambers, confirmation bias, and motivated reasoning (e.g., Feezell 2016; Jacobsen et al., 2016; Bowyer & Kahne, 2019). These participants were perhaps *most* curious to consume information that bolstered their views or elaborated on their current perspectives. They tended to indicate they were less curious about views dissonant to their own, choosing to characterize them as less substantive, less credible, or less engaging. Therefore, these participants often reacted to posts in positive ways—rather than in opposition to them. One participant said:

> Stronger reactions from me aligned most with posts I agreed with. I think that is because I felt connected to other people wanting change. Rather than fighting against people and their thoughts, I felt like I was in a position to better understand and get involved (R1=0.63).

In other words, for many of the teachers, this perceived alignment gestured toward an affinity group—reacting most strongly to posts with which they identified and those which accommodated a sense of collectivism toward progress or change.

Inspiring Social Action

The Curious Consolidator was eager to consume content that helps lead to social action. One participating teacher in this group wrote, "I tend to fixate more on posts that anger me. However, these posts leave me ranting, not acting. Posts with more positive tones don't always elicit emotional reactions but are more likely to make me want to take action in some way." (R1=0.66*). This teacher was describing a tension between

emotional reactions and a desire for action. While emotional posts may have previously garnered reactions, they tended to describe reacting more strongly to posts that helped them imagine acting. The perception towards action highlighted in this quotation represents a pattern across all the participants who loaded onto the Curious Consolidator subject position. As this participant described, they worked to move beyond emotional reactions to focus instead on what they can do. I frame this as "curiosity" because these teachers seemed to want to extend their knowledge to be more action-oriented. Another participant in this group said, "stronger reactions tended to come from things that presented a little bit more clear facts or clear direction" (R1=0.66*). The interest in posts that offered a clear direction suggests the Curious Consolidator was eager to know what to do after engaging with content online.

This group's responses to the Black Lives Matter movement explicitly highlighted their preference for action-oriented posts. When engaging with this collection of posts, the teachers in this factor focused on social action that would help pursue and advocate for change, justice, and equity. The teachers in this group consistently and uniformly framed calls for justice and police reform as urgent and needed. For example, one teacher described racial injustices in the U.S. as "a very serious problem" (R1=0.66*). Another participant loading onto this factor said, "No person should have to carry concerns [about safety] based on race, ethnicity, religion, and so on" (R1=0.63). These teachers' comments suggest recognition and alignment with the messages of Black Lives Matter. Having accepted the need for justice and change, the Curious Consolidator was curious about what to *do*. When thinking about the persistent societal harms inflicted on Black and Brown Americans, this group of all white teachers described wanting to feel a sense

of community working toward progress. For example, a collection of posts[10] that proposed policy or highlighted progress already made regarding policing and racial justice elicited stronger reactions than in the other factors. These included Q-set Item 16, where politician Joe Walsh noted "millions of [white folks] have grown. And learned" to no longer respond "all lives matter!" upon hearing "Black Lives Matter"; Item 27 and Item 39, where Campaign Zero mapped U.S. cities that have changed use of force policies and advanced policies like #8CantWait to decrease police violence; and Item 36, where Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez tweeted about ending impunity of police violence. One participant, referring to the Campaign Zero post about changing use of force policies (Item 27), said, "the idea behind this—that a social movement has had widespread, positive impact—is powerful…my initial reaction is one of hope and pride" (R1=0.66*). Even when participants in this group did not reference specific posts, a few of the participants in this group described a broader interest in seeing progress and impact. By reacting with hope and pride in the perceived momentum toward change, social media content that provided a positive, optimistic look at the social and political landscape drew in the Curious Consolidator.

Gathering Evidence

One action that seemed tangible for the Curious Consolidator was correcting and responding to misunderstandings around Black Lives Matter. When considering posts online that supported and bolstered the current views of the Curious Consolidator, many participants noted a significant engagement with posts that used statistics or compelling graphics. The Curious Consolidator sorted visuals, infographics, or statistical information

[10] Again, all the posts specifically referenced and described throughout my analysis can be accessed and viewed through the links provided in Appendix D

higher than the other factors. For example, the two posts sorted as eliciting the strongest reactions were Item 4 and Item 41. Both posts include image-based graphics. Item 4 shows an Instagram post by @nastyfeminism containing an infographic titled “Fatal police shootings in the U.S. since January 01, 2014: Black Americans are disproportionately affected”. One participant described this post as a graph that “does a really great job of kind of cut[ting] away some of the fluff and rhetoric that we hear all the time and just like gives it to you straight” (R1=0.66*). Here, this teacher claimed the visual format of the post was more straightforward than written text, which can get muddled by “fluff and rhetoric.” This reflects previous research that suggests the presence of visuals make it easier and quicker to consume information (van Leeuwen, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2016) and tends to increase perceived credibility of the data (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). Visual representations of data, therefore, become more difficult to refute (e.g., Hameleers et al., 2020). Another participant echoed this sentiment, saying, “the graph, including percentages and quantitative values, is helpful to the reader. It represents and combats a common argument.” (R1=0.40). They suggested that quantitative data can “represent” and “combat” information better than other posts in the collection. These kinds of comments, which were notably common, reflect the way this group of teachers generally perceived visual and statistical data as self-evident or (more) concrete than text-only information—requiring little interpretation and thus immutable (e.g., Henke et al., 2020; Koetsenruijter & Willem, 2011; McConway, 2015).

For the Curious Consolidator, these kinds of visual posts helped them think deeper about the topic as they gathered evidence to support their claims or refute the claims of an imagined opponent to the Black Lives Matter movement. Q-set Item 31,

which the Curious Consolidator sorted higher than in the other factors, was described in similar ways. The post from the Instagram account @chnge shows a visual representation of the statement "Black lives matter"—emphasizing that the movement and statement are not implying superiority but rather a call for equity in response to the injustices ingrained in the current systems. One participant said they reacted to this post "because of its content and because of its display. It is very accessible, easy to understand, and makes a valid point about a commonly misunderstood problem" (R1=0.40). Here, the teacher gestured toward an agreement with the content, but also that the visual format of the post clearly and readily corrects a misunderstanding. In both of these cases, the posts may not have provided new information. Instead, they offered information packaged or formatted in ways that are considered compelling or more concrete. One participant described this, saying, "I enjoyed the posts that were giving me a new perspective and something I hadn't thought about before, and maybe almost putting words to like something I was thinking, but I just couldn't necessarily like verbalize" (R1=0.66*). The majority of these participants emphasized how they reacted most to posts that provided clarity or put words to something they already were thinking. Therefore, in addition to being eager for action and progress, the Curious Consolidator was keen to solidify their stance with well-articulated, neatly packaged, and clearly framed posts.

Grappling with Dissonance

It is worth noting that, for the Curious Consolidator, engagement online was not without struggle. Curiosity online requires grappling with aspects of arguments and perspectives that fail to map onto one's current views perfectly. In particular, the participants loading onto this factor attended to aspects of credibility in ranging ways.

Many of the teachers in this group described adopting an open stance online—willing to "listen to new perspectives and read and research" (R1=0.66*), to "think deeper" (R1=0.41), and to be "open to discussions and reflections for change" (R1=0.63). This openness required them to process some posts differently. For example, when thinking about the Q-set collectively, one participant said:

> Posts regarding the defunding of the police were tough for me to respond to as I think there are instances where the police overstep their bounds, but I also believe a police force is a necessary aspect to protect society. (R1=0.46*).

Here, this teacher struggled to reconcile the harms and injustices inflicted by police officers with calls to abolish the police. Participants who responded in a way similar to the participant quoted above described these moments of dissonance as something to think about further. Notably, Kaepernick's tweet calling for the abolition of the police (Item 19) was ranked lower than in other factors. Similarly, a different participant noted their surprise in seeing posts "criticizing the BLM movement authored by people who appeared to be Black themselves" (R1=0.41). The participant did not categorize this kind of "surprise" as eliciting a strong reaction. Instead, the Curious Consolidator sorted posts from Black commentator Candace Owens and Black radio talk show host Larry Elder lower than the participants in the other groups. In other words, despite saying they were curious and open, the Curious Consolidator did not work to accommodate challenging or surprising content. The Curious Consolidator only focused on accommodating, expanding, and consolidating their already existing views. The openness that this group of teachers indicated in their written responses was seemingly not applied to posts that did not align with their current beliefs when sorting the posts.

Some of the teachers recognized a discrepancy between which posts elicited reactions. For example, one participant noted, “Generally, memes that rely heavily on images don’t elicit strong reactions from me, but those that provide perspectives (admittedly those I tend to agree with) that are thought-provoking do” (R1=0.66*). Here the teacher distinguished between informative posts and “memes that rely heavily on images.” As I have explored, that is not to say that posts including visually rich, quantitative data were not considered informative or engaging. Instead, the use of the term “memes” here seems to signal a particular kind of visual post. For example, Item 34 and Item 41 feature a similar format—pairing two images side by side in contrast with bolded, superimposed text. Significantly, the Curious Consolidator reacted to these similarly structured posts differently. Item 34 elicited weak reactions, while Item 41 elicited some of the strongest reactions by the Curious Consolidator. While there are multiple possible reasons the participants may have engaged with these posts so differently, six of these participants highlighted the importance of context in their interpretations of posts. As one of these teachers said, “context for me is very important, and if I don’t have it, I usually try to find it…[for some posts], I wouldn’t even know where to begin finding the context.” (R1=0.66*). Because having context was so significant for this group of ten teachers, it is possible that Item 41 provided sufficient context—the reader can identify former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin and former NFL player Colin Kaepernick kneeling on a football field sideline. While the participants draw on the current social landscape to fill in the narrative, the presence of identifiable figures in the photographs provided sufficient context.

Conversely, Item 34 contrasts a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. marching with images void of clearly identifiable people or places—these images could be anyone, in any place, at any moment of time. When asked about this image, some of the participants indicated that they found this meme to be lacking sufficient context or evidence that the images actually depict events in Minneapolis following Floyd's murder. As one teacher said, "that photo has no context, so I wasn't a fan of it." (R1=0.66*). This attention to specific details in the posts could suggest that the Curious Consolidator may be less concerned with the partisan leanings of the post, instead focusing on the merits or credibility of the claims.

However, it is worth noting that the teachers in this group inconsistently referenced their attention to context and sourcing. For example, no participants explicitly questioned the sourcing or credibility of the infographic displaying the disproportionate shootings of Black and Brown Americans by police (Item 4) despite these participating teachers characterizing the post as eliciting their strongest reaction. Again, research suggests that people often interpret visual, quantifiable data as more credible (Hameleers et al., 2020). However, because the participants in this group mainly questioned the insufficient context and sourcing of posts with which they disagreed, I believe these teachers demonstrated how their political subjectivity informed their perceptions of credibility. Recent research has highlighted the relationship between a teacher's ideology and their interpretation of source credibility (Clark, Schmeichel & Garrett, 2021). These teachers' inconsistent attention to sourcing and credibility could suggest similar biases informed by their political subjectivity when they engage with social media content.

Furthermore, other teachers in this group described posts that elicited weaker reactions as "clickbait" (R1=0.66*), "manipulative" (R1=0.63), or "low-quality," "highly questionable," and "pandering" (R1=0.40). These labels call into question the credibility of these posts in similar ways to the use of "meme." As a Curious Consolidator, attention to credibility was worthy of note. For example, one of the two lowest ranked posts was from Breitbart's Facebook page (Item 12). Nearly all of the participants questioned the post's credibility, but none expressly referred to Breitbart, which is widely viewed as an unreliable, questionable source. Instead, some relied on the "overall appearance" of the post to assess the credibility, saying the post "just seemed fake, pandering, and the content didn't seem credible" (R1=0.40). These participants evaluated credibility based on the post's appearance rather than noting the source of the post. McGrew et al. (2018) found students from the middle school to university level also over-relied on their ability and capacity to assess a site's credibility based on included features or aspects of an online post. In the same way, these teachers relied on the appearance of posts to determine their credibility.

Additionally, this group of teachers consistently noted they considered some posts to be "clickbait." One participant stated that Facebook is "notoriously known for 'clickbait' type posts" (R1=0.66*), generalizing their skepticism of any content circulating on Facebook. This teacher went on to say:

> I mean, just scrolling on Facebook, I'm like, 'seriously, people?' It just seems to be very common…to repost things without maybe even clicking on them or a headline that seems to fit an agenda, and you're like, 'yay!' I have found that when I actually click on the link, it seems to be kind of ridiculous. (R1=0.66*).

Remaining skeptical of content online is not inherently problematic. However, what became clear through this participant's comments—and other comments this group of teachers made about credibility—was that they were primarily skeptical when the post's content was in opposition to their views. Political subjectivity, therefore, seemed to play a role in how these teachers made sense of credibility and sourcing of social media content since many of the Left-leaning posts ranked as eliciting strong reactions were also opinion-based. While these kinds of partisan-based reactions may not be surprising, it is worth attending to how a teacher's reactions shape what is considered factual versus opinion, credible versus untrustworthy.

The Dismissive Scroller

The Dismissive Scroller self-identified as a frequent social media user and as someone who is well engaged in social and political movements. Therefore, the Dismissive Scroller was less likely to react to social media posts they described as familiar or overly shared online. These teachers had strong and well-developed political opinions and were thus self-assured in their views. When confronted with opposing perspectives they considered to be harmful or problematic, they were dismissive. This group of teachers was unified by the kind of posts that elicited weak reactions. They uniformly indicated in their written responses that they would readily and easily dismiss posts that were uninteresting or unengaging. In contrast, these teachers offered a range of dissonant and contradictory descriptions of posts that elicited stronger reactions in their written responses. In other words, they were less aligned on which posts elicited strong reactions than those that elicited weak reactions. Therefore, the commonality of this group of teachers was regarding the posts they dismissed. Significantly, the participants

recognized that the posts they readily ignored were clearly and explicitly shaped by their partisanship based social media consumption.

Numbed by Overexposure

The Dismissive Scroller more explicitly centered their political views—recognizing and naming the role partisan politics played in their interpretation of each post. When looking at the generated factor array holistically, it is apparent that many of the Left-leaning posts elicited weaker reactions. All of the ten posts ranked lower than in the other factors were Left-leaning. Because most of these teachers identified as Left-leaning, their familiarity with the content embedded in these Left-leaning posts is not surprising. Unlike the Curious Consolidator, who ultimately was interested in solidifying their views with like-minded posts, the Dismissive Scroller described being overexposed to many of the Left-leaning posts. Several participants noted the relationship between their own political subjectivities and their social media consumption—explicitly referencing the echo chambers of their feeds. For example, one participant said they "exclusively follow progressive, leftist, and pro-Black accounts" and that "the people [they] interact with on Facebook tend to be liberals and moderate conservatives, and they share a lot of political content." (R2=0.51*). Another said, "I feel like I consume more Leftist politic type stuff" (R2=0.65*). Several participants noted they were, therefore, less familiar with Right-leaning perspectives. As one participant said, "I didn't really see much of the more conservative takes on my feeds" (R2=0.57). Because this group of teachers described consuming more Left-leaning content online, they emphasized how their continual exposure to Left-leaning content made them unlikely to react. As one teacher noted:

> I'm on social media a lot, so I see like everything. I think I don't really have a reaction anymore—like hardly…Normally, if I'm going to have a reaction, it's probably going to be because whatever they wrote was like really intelligent or like something I haven't heard that before or is a good way to look at [the topic]. That's probably when I'm going to react if I do. (R2=0.65*)

Here, this teacher acknowledged that the overfamiliarity with social media content generally weakened their reactions. They used "if" to indicate the conditions that make a reaction *possible*—requiring a novel or thoughtful perspective. A reaction is therefore not guaranteed. Another participant said they felt "numb" toward particular accounts—saying they "can almost anticipate what's coming" from those accounts (R2=0.51*). A different teacher described engaging less with information they've "known for a while or ideas that seem basic or obvious." (R2=0.57). A consistent theme across these participants was a feeling of "overexposure" (R2=0.44) to the posts and the embedded content.

Critiquing Reductionism

In most cases, these teachers paired their claims of overfamiliarity with a critique of the post's circulation. While the Curious Consolidator responded to posts that highlighted progress or possible paths toward justice, the Dismissive Scroller found identical posts do little to lead to actual change or progress. In this way, they were impatient with and critical of posts they found overly simplistic and reductionist. For example, the two lowest ranked items—Item 25 and Item 31—were both posts that featured stylized graphics—one stating "staying out of politics is a privilege" and the other, @chnge's visual representation of what it means to say, "Black Lives Matter." One participant described these posts as performative, saying, "I see so many posts like these.

At this point, it comes off as performative to me" (R2=0.65*). For this teacher, these posts function to indicate an allegiance with Black Lives Matter but do little to advance real, systemic change. The comments made by these teachers suggested that these posts become performative because a user can display allyship on their profile without significant engagement in addressing racial injustices offline. Another participant made similar comments when they said, "These posts represent the aestheticization of social media political posts. It's a cute image so people can show they're supportive while keeping up with the theme of their page" (R2=0.57). Pointing to the posts' aesthetics highlights how some designed posts function to make political posts more palatable. While this participant was not critiquing the content of these posts, they recognized that some users may prefer a cohesive aesthetic on their feeds. This attention to aesthetics could limit or constrain what information or content is widely shared. Additionally, another participant noted, "this image gave me no new information" (R2=0.44). In this way, these kinds of "cute image" posts reduce the complexity of demands for justice into overly simplistic graphics. These teachers dismissed them because they did little to extend or expand the conversation around Black lives, police brutality, or the ongoing national uprisings for racial justice.

Impatient for Action

In most of these participants' comments, what was often subtly present was that, in their consumption of social media, these participants had been saturated with the embedded messages and content that they found nothing new or compelling. For example, one participant said:

> The graphics are so overused, like this whole, "let's make these sayings pretty" is kind of performative…Like, of course, Black Lives Matter, you know what I mean? Like obviously! And then, like "staying out a politics is a privilege." I mean, yeah, we know. (R2=0.65*).

While pointing to the aesthetic performance of "pretty" social media graphics, this teacher also described the content as obvious or already known—even generalizing this knowledge to an unknown "we." I interpret this participant's comment as indicative of an annoyance that these kinds of posts prevent the conversation from going deeper and moving the cause forward. Specifically discussing @chnge's graphic of racialized fists (Item 31), a different participant said:

> To me, this is the bare minimum information needed to understand the rationale behind movements focused on racial justice. I have seen variations of the idea many times to the point where it barely registers. It's almost depressing that someone felt that it needed to be shared in this form to be understood. (R2=0.51*)

Here, this participating teacher described a familiarity with the many variations of this kind of post, elaborating on this notion that the embedded content does little to extend to the conversation by characterizing the content as the "bare minimum." However, because they are self-assured in their views and experiences, this participant found it "almost depressing" that the post's message is necessary—that people must be reminded that saying Black Lives Matter is to advocate for equality, not superiority. This teacher described Lebron James's Instagram post comparing Officer Chauvin kneeling to Kaepernick kneeling (Item 41) in nearly identical ways, critiquing what they considered a rudimentary message and frustrated that it remains necessary. Because they were overly

familiar or numb to this kind of content, the Dismissive Scroller described emotional responses to the fact that such basic information remains relevant or engaging for so many. This sentiment is particularly significant because both participants were women of color who were likely frustrated that their own lived experiences and known truths require palatably aesthetic social media posts, particularly because these kinds of posts do little to ensure racial justice and equity or their personal safety.

The Dismissive Scroller was also attendant to systems and structures they felt prevented true justice. In short, none of the posts in the Q-set fully met their interest in broader social critiques. One of these participants said in their own consumption of social media, they were more interested in Leftist political content and "anti-capitalism stuff," going on to say, "I like to hear like Marx, you know? Like that is what I want to consume more of—not like some light and liberal picture of fists." (R2=0.65*). This teacher reiterated that the "light and liberal" posts are insufficient and ill-equipped to dismantle systems—like capitalism—that perpetuate persistent harms. They remained convinced that many social media posts are not to-scale for the changes that are necessary to achieve justice, saying, "this isn't enough" (R2=0.65*). This participant later described pushing back on a wide range of systems—capitalism, misogyny, white supremacy, saying:

> I'm always going to like push on anything. I'm going to push on everything. I want equality, and I mean that in the truest of senses and in every aspect. So I'm going to push back on anything that doesn't give us equality, no matter what it is. (R2=0.65*).

Other participants referenced different larger, systemic problems like "racial profiling" (R2=0.51*) and the "white standard for civility" (R2=0.57), which they said impede

racial justice. These teachers were naming larger systems, structures, and practices left unnamed in many of the posts and thus fell short of substantial enough progress. In short, because these teachers were attendant to larger, nefarious societal structures, they quickly dismissed posts they felt were not radical enough in imagining more just futures.

Dismissing Opposition

The Dismissive Scroller said they had stronger reactions to posts with which they disagreed. Again, there was less cohesion around how they described their stronger reactions. However, because four of the seven participants in this factor identified as Left-leaning and all of them aligned with the Black Lives Matter movement, they reacted more strongly to Right-leaning content, which often raised critiques of BLM and various proposed policies. All twelve items ranked higher by the Dismissive Scroller than the other factors were Right-leaning posts (See Appendix C). As one participant explained, they reacted more strongly to these posts "because [they] don't see them *as* much" (R2=0.65*).

While they sorted these less familiar, Right-leaning posts as eliciting their stronger reactions, there was a subsection of participants in this group who were equally dismissive of these posts as they were to the posts with which they were overly familiar. While these teachers may have expressed being surprised by the content, several of the participants in this group often critiqued or pointed out that they felt these posts were clearly misinformed. In other words, they also dismissed the posts they reacted to strongly, saying they were "stupid" (R2=0.65*), "easy to see them as wrong" (R2= -0.55), or "fake news" (R2= -0.50). Rather than feeling the posts were reductive or performative, these teachers described the posts that elicited stronger reactions as

illogical or false. This characterization of these Right-leaning posts suggests that these teachers were equally unsatisfied by posts that elicited strong reactions. While the Left-leaning posts were too superficial, the Right-leaning posts lacked logic. Therefore, these participating teachers framed posts from both partisan perspectives as too simplistic to warrant additional engagement or reaction.

For other teachers in this group, their strong reactions to conservative posts were in stark contrast to what they felt were overly simplistic or reductionist perspectives. Having described some of the Left-leaning posts as commonsensical or rudimentary, these teachers reacted strongly to Right-leaning posts because they reminded these teachers of how many people accept and share harmful or uninformed content online about racial injustice. As one participant said, "I had stronger reactions to posts I disagreed with because it was a reminder that there are people out there who are extremely racist and don't see systemic racism" (R2=0.57). Statements like this draw attention to the tension between the participants' dismissal of over-shared sentiments or basic information that do little to advance racial justice and the shocking confrontation with the imagined consumers of social media content that undercuts or critiques their view. One of the other participants described their stronger reactions as being connected to "pay[ing] more attention to the related negative emotions like anger, frustration, and fear than to positive emotions like feeling heard or validated." (R2=0.51*). Here this teacher described a sort of dismissal of "feeling heard or validated" and instead found themself reacting to posts that cause "negative emotions." The reminder that racist views or problematic perspectives also circulate widely was difficult to process for these participants.

The participating teachers identified several posts that they described as including significant misunderstandings (see Item 34 and Item 38). These misunderstandings elicited stronger reactions but were also justification to further dismiss the content. For example, while the Curious Consolidator said the images included in Item 34 lacked evidence, the Dismissive Scroller noted the picture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement he represents in the post overlooked the historical context. The Curious Consolidator wanted evidence these pictures were actually from Minneapolis, capturing events following George Floyd's death. The Dismissive Scroller said the context of these images' production was not appropriately situated. One participant said the post was "just so stupid. People are clueless about history" (R2=0.65*). A different participant expressed similar frustration, saying:

> This [post] just makes me mad because it's a gross misrepresentation of the Civil Rights Movement. It represents the movement as being completely peaceful, and everyone just agreed to stop being racist because they saw how bad segregation was. People were against the Civil Rights Movement for the same reasons back then and now. The people reposting this are probably unaware of Dr. King's more 'radical' ideas surrounding race, poverty, and class. This image also misrepresents the current movement by only showing violence rather than the outnumbering amount of peaceful protesting. (R2=0.57).

For this participant, the comparison was problematic because it overgeneralized two movements—the Civil Rights Movement as wholly peaceful and the current Black Lives Matter movement as altogether violent. As a group of social studies teachers, this attention to historical interpretation may not be surprising.

However, this group of teachers also referenced seemingly disconnected and disparate experiences to inform their reactions. Providing seemingly incongruous descriptions emphasizes the muddiness of how and why these teachers were reacting to the social media posts included in this study. For example, one of the teachers in this group described being frustrated with Former Secretary of State Michael Pompeo's description of the *1619 Project.* This teacher said, "I actually have read the *1619 Project,* and this would be something that I would like to teach my students. To hear that people think it is radical liberal brainwashing is just kind of crazy to me" (R2=0.65*). By saying they had *actually* read through the project implied that Pompeo had not, but also positioned them as an expert, providing an informed reaction. They reiterated their comfort with the content—saying they would like to use the *1619 Project* with their middle school students—to dismiss Pompeo's tweet as "crazy." These dismissals rely on knowledge and expertise that these teachers often claimed by referring to their own consumption or engagement with information offline. Because this group of participating teachers claimed robust and well-informed political opinions, they felt confident in their views. They could identify faults or gaps in the arguments of posts with which they disagree by drawing on various experiences and knowledge.

Inversed and Hybrid Interpretations

It is important to note that several teachers who loaded as Dismissive Scrollers engaged with the content and described their reactions in slightly different ways. In this section, I present my analysis of why these teachers loaded onto this factor. I consider the presence of these inversed interpretations as indicative of hybrid subject positions. Because none of the participants' subjectivities can be cohesively packaged, it is not

surprising that there were variations in how this group of teachers interpreted the Q-set. I highlight two variations that I identified in my analysis.

First, this factor was *bipolar*, meaning two participants negatively loaded onto the factor. When there are negatively loading sorts onto a factor, it indicates that some participants sorted the items in the mirror image of the other Dismissive Scrollers. In this case, this means that two participants had strong reactions to posts that elicited weak reactions from the other teachers in this group. For example, while most of the teachers loading onto the Dismissive Scroller indicated they had weak reactions to @chnge's post that used racialized fists to describe what is meant by "Black Lives Matter" (Item 31), these two teachers said they reacted strongly to this post. Additionally, the written responses from participants and the interview data revealed that posts that the Dismissive Scroller described as less familiar and thus elicited a stronger reaction were described by these two negatively loading participants as overly familiar to them. For instance, one of these negatively loading teachers said, "I just felt that some of the posts were 'expected'" (R2= -0.50). This participant explicitly referenced a collection of Right-leaning posts, saying:

> I think I have personally just become numb to these [Right-leaning posts] that I know…I think having such a personal connection with people on the other side of the political spectrum and years of dealing with those people, it just doesn't elicit a response from me. (R2= -0.50).

Although this teacher identified as a Left-leaning, they mentioned having family and close friends who strongly identified as Republicans. They described being used to seeing and hearing Right-leaning critiques through them. This familiarity with Right-leaning

content allowed both of these teachers to quickly dismiss Right-leaning posts in similar ways that the positive loading participants dismissed overly familiar Left-leaning content.

Another example of this inversion is that the positively loading Dismissive Scrollers described having a strong reaction to Charlie Kirk's tweet saying, "if you loot, riot, and destroy you lose all moral credibility, in my eyes, to protest injustice" (Q-Set Item 37). One of these two teachers described ignoring this post because it was "ludicrous" (R2= -0.55). Although these two participants felt similarly about the misunderstandings and absurdity of many of the Right-leaning posts, they sorted them as eliciting weak reactions because they were more familiar. How these two teachers described their weak reactions reinforces the ways their tendency to dismiss social media content that they felt was overly familiar based on their own partisan exposure significantly unified this group of teachers.

These two teachers did not offer a lot of detail in why they reacted strongly to Left-leaning posts. One possibility for why they reacted strongly is that they saw value in posts the other Dismissive Scrollers felt were reductionist. For example, in describing why they reacted strongly to @chnge's post (Item 31), one of these two teachers said, "people need to see this. It is a great display of the issue at hand" (R2= -0.55). Being connected to many Right-leaning friends and family members, it is possible these two participants felt these Left-leaning posts were essential to disrupt views they felt were limited or problematic. The other teacher made a broader statement about some of the Left-leaning posts saying, "there is potential for this information to open up someone else's eyes" (R2= -0.50). While other teachers in this group described some posts as reductionist or performative, these two teachers recognized these posts as capable of

disrupting some of the conservative views and perspectives with which they were personally familiar. In short, these two teachers seemed to view these kinds of posts optimistically—recognizing them as capable of change.

I found this optimistic view of a social media post's capacity also present among the positively loading Dismissive Scrollers. For example, one participant said:

> I think that there's a lot of performative activism [on social media]. I do feel like some people just [post stuff] because they feel like they have to. But then I think also social media is, in a way, a representation of you… You're going to post what you believe. You're going to post things so people can read them and maybe help educate people or get people to see from a different point of view. So I do think it's a mixture of that. (R2=0.65*)

While most of their responses highlighted the performativity of many posts—and thus justified dismissing them as insufficient—this teacher also recognized that there can still be value in sharing content that may seem superficial or reductionist in other contexts. Because of these parallel descriptions and justifications, I interpret the inversed interpretation of the two negatively loading teachers as well aligned with the other teachers who positively loaded as Dismissive Scrollers.

While these two negatively loading participants reacted in ways that were different yet aligned, another participant, who I refer to as an outlier, offered inversed descriptions of their reactions. This outlier sorted the items in very similar ways to the other positively loading Dismissive Scrollers. This teacher loaded onto the factor purely, at a significance level of 0.58. However, in their descriptions of their decision-making, the outlier said they reacted most strongly to posts with which they agreed and less

strongly to those with which they disagreed—which was the opposite of the other positively loading teachers in this group. This difference is likely because this outlier identified as a strong Republican, while most of the other teachers in this group identified as Left-leaning or only loosely Right-leaning. While the other Dismissive Scrollers were strongly reacting because they felt the posts misrepresented the embedded issue or topic, the outlier "found [themself] saying 'wow, I never thought about this before, but I agree'" (R2=0.58*). For instance, one of the positively loading teachers associated with the Dismissive Scroller said they reacted strongly to an Instagram post showing a tweet by conservative commentator Ben Shapiro (Item 28). That participant described being frustrated by this tweet because "Shapiro insults other people rather than the idea" (R2=0.44). However, the outlier noted this same post stood out to them because they listened to Ben Shapiro daily and agreed with his views. The outlier also loosely referenced their relationship to some of the other posts saying that they felt proposals to defund the police were "extremist" and that they had a "distaste for the person that Kaepernick is." This participant seemed to identify with many of the posts with which they agreed and disregarded posts with which they disagreed. In this way, the outlier's descriptions were actually more aligned with the Curious Consolidator since they described reacting to information that solidified or bolstered their views. However, my analysis grouped this outlying sort with the other teachers loading as a Dismissive Scroller because they organized the posts in ways that were more similar to them—having stronger reactions to Right-leaning posts and weaker reactions to Left-leaning posts. This hybridity reiterates the messiness of subjectivity and the importance of attending to the many dissonant ways participants interpreted and made sense of these

social media posts. It also highlights a significant limitation to this study, which was the lack of Republican identifying participants. This outlying teacher was the only participant who identified strongly with the Republican party. The other five Right-leaning participants only loosely identified with the party or identified as Right-leaning moderates. The presence of other strongly identifying Republican participants may have produced additional subject positions that my collected data did not capture.

The Angered Constituent

The *Angered Constituent* primarily expressed frustration with how political leaders were using their social media platforms. The participants in this group described being annoyed at what they considered a politician's irresponsible use of power when posting about aspects of the Black Lives Matter movement. These teachers generally reacted most strongly to posts they felt would reach and be accepted by a wider audience than those that seemed easily disregarded. Like the Dismissive Scroller, these teachers were self-assured in their views and thus focused on their disagreement with various political leaders.

Harmful Rhetoric

Uniformly, all eight of the participants significantly loading onto this factor referenced frustration with content posted by political leaders. In particular, this group of teachers focused on the narratives and rhetoric used by political leaders. For example, one participant loading onto this factor said they reacted to "posts by elected leaders who push false narratives or ignore facts, choose to focus on narratives that play to their base and therefore contribute to the further polarization of an issue that shouldn't be polarizing" (R3=0.50*). This participant described their frustration that the politicians

were framing racial justice, police violence, and the Black Lives Matter movement as a polarizing or politically debated issue. According to the written responses from the Angered Constituent, when elected leaders "play to their base," they further entrench the discussion into an oppositional lens, which they considered to be particularly problematic. Several participants in this group expressed similar reactions to posts by politicians. For instance, one participant said they reacted most strongly to posts from "people in positions of power who tweet out blind propaganda" (R3=0.55*). Another participant elaborated on this frustration, saying:

> These [posts by politicians] made me angry because they essentially missed the entire point and refused to acknowledge the reasoning behind the need for the movement…I want to see change happen and for our President of all people to be so hateful and narrow-minded really upsets me." (R3=0.72*)

This participant expressed frustration that this "hateful and narrow-minded" rhetoric and the refusal to acknowledge the ongoing injustices impedes progress. One on hand, the Angered Constituents' written responses recognized that posts from politicians could function to deny the need for change and therefore lead to governmental inaction. On the other hand, they also described seeing these posts as validating perspectives that may have been considered fringe views without politicians spreading them on their accounts. For example, one participant said:

> By far, I feel like the people who bear the most blame for [how people talk about politics on social media] are the politicians who use social media to spread misleading narratives or name-calling or just posting ridiculous stuff. Because you're used to seeing your weird uncle that you only talk to you at Christmas post

> stuff like that, but then your Senator posts stuff like that? And it's like, "Oh, is that a legitimate mainstream way of thinking about this issue?" No, it's not! But apparently, it is now because the senator's tweeting it out. I think that it's just irresponsible. It's just irresponsible behavior by people who are way too educated to be doing that kind of stuff (R3=0.50*).

They claimed that politicians have a significant capacity to shape and validate particular narratives—a level of influence far greater than a "weird uncle." They said that politicians who "absolutely refuse to acknowledge a problem with the way we police right now…are the epitome of irresponsible and selfish leadership" (R3=0.50*). This teacher later clarified this irresponsibility by saying that supporters of these politicians are "going to take [the post] at face value and choose to believe it without doing any kind of like deeper research themselves" (R3=0.50*). The majority of the participants critiqued the messages politicians were spreading as particularly harmful. However, one participant took this further, saying, "I believe politicians should be mostly silent on social media" (R3=0.45). While others did not share this view, I believe their statement aligns with some of the other comments from participants. Specifically, I interpret this comment as recognizing the ways politicians can leverage social media to appeal to their followers and, in many cases, problematically set the tone for discussions of social and political issues. While this comment fails to consider is how a political official's silence on injustices is not neutral, this teacher could be suggesting that social media should not be the platform for statements from politicians.

The Angered Constituted also directed their frustration with how politicians use their platforms toward other influential accounts. For example, one participant pointed to

a tweet by political pundit Candace Owens, where she refers to responses to the murder of Breonna Taylor to claim that the Department of Justice should investigate the Black Lives Matter organization as a domestic terrorist organization (Item 8). In response, this participant said:

> When people with a large following post tweets without knowing the specifics of what they are talking about, it causes a lot of damage. There were a host of issues with how the case was handled, and trying to spin the unjustifiable murder of a woman of color to the benefit of your personal political agenda is disgusting. (R3=.55*).

Here, this teacher extended the frustration with political leaders to other accounts they believe have large followings. In the same way they recognized that rhetoric can be harmful, the Angered Constituent argued that the circulation of misinformation to advance a political agenda is also damaging. Another participant said:

> if your making claims that you can't back up with any sort of evidence, it's not really an argument at that point anymore. It's more like that's what you want to hear more than what it actually is...These things shouldn't get traction because it's just empty stuff. (R3= -0.52)

While these teachers explicitly directed their critiques toward politicians and accounts with large followings, it is worth reiterating that I collected all the posts in this study from accounts with at least 200,000 followers. In other words, all of these accounts were capable of influencing large groups of people. However, the Angered Constituent recognized that not all of these accounts carry the same weight or assumption of credibility. These teachers framed political leaders and other political pundits as having a

greater capacity to influence people than many of the other accounts included in the Q-set that are likely not as well known.

Positioned as Constituents

When reacting to specific posts, the participants in this group primarily focused on posts from or about their own elected representatives. In particular, they focused on two posts—one was a post from President Donald Trump's Instagram account (Item 26), and the other was a Breitbart post featuring a headline about Georgia Senator Kelly Loeffler (Item 5). The Angered Constituent sorted both of these posts as eliciting the strongest reaction. At the time of sorting, all the participants were constituents of these politicians, as U.S. residents living in Georgia. At the time of sorting, Trump and Loeffler were also particularly prominent figures in local and national media coverage as the results of the 2020 President Election had yet to be called and as Loeffler was entering a Senatorial run-off race. Given this timing, throughout their written responses, participants described both Trump and Loeffler as being particularly relevant. As one participant noted, these posts stood out because "we are in the current special election season" (R3=0.50).

When describing why the Instagram post from President Trump elicited such a strong reaction, participants reiterated their annoyance at what they perceived to be a lack of action. For example, one participant said that "to see supposed 'leaders' of our country stating things like the radical Left has gone crazy and playing the blame game instead of actually trying to solve an issue is annoying" (R3=0.65*). This idea of blaming others rather than taking action or addressing racial injustice was a common theme in the comments made by participants in this group. Another participant said, "President Trump

keeps blaming others for his mistakes. He is not a very credible person to listen to" (R3= -0.52). Here, the participant linked Trump's blaming of others as an indication of incredibility.

Similarly, when looking at the Breitbart post featuring a quotation from Loeffler, participants expressed anger that she was relying on fear tactics. For instance, one participant said:

> This post is about Kelly Loeffler, who is awful for so many reasons, so before I even read the caption, I was agitated. Like so many others, I feel she truly understands the situation but simply doesn't care about justice and wants her comfy life to continue at the expense of others' suffering. She therefore subverts and perverts the conversation by fearmongering about change and Marxism knowing its power to turn people away from change. (R3-0.41).

This participant started by recognizing their own biases against Loeffler, stating they were agitated before reading the text. The teacher then said that Loeffler's fearmongering seems strategic as she looks out for her own self-interests rather than pursuing justice. This kind of post was frustrating for one participant because they said the post is "filled with so much disinformation that it is disgusting" (R3=0.50). Here, this teacher implied Loeffler is intentionally misleading people with false information by referring to disinformation, which denotes deliberate deceit. Another participant said, "it legitimately angers me that she has massive power in this country with such ignorant takes" (R3=0.65*). The reaction captured in this comment seems to express disappointment and frustration that both Trump and Loeffler were (at the time) supposed to represent their

interests and values, and yet both politicians were failing to advocate for the justice and equity this participant desired.

Unfazed with Aligned

Six of the eight participants loading on as Angered Constituents identified as Left-leaning. The factor arrays for the Curious Consolidator and the Dismissive Scroller were both divided by the political views of the post. However, when looking at the factor array for the Angered Constituent (Appendix C), there are less distinctive partisan divides. The lack of partisan alignment was surprising since the majority of these teachers described being strongly Left-leaning. Of the seven items ranked higher than in the other factors, four were Right-leaning, and three were Left-leaning. Of the seven items ranked lower than in the other factors, three were Right-leaning, and four were Left-leaning.

Additionally, in their responses to follow-up questions, the participants in this group focused more on their strong reactions, providing little explanation for why they sorted some items lower. Some participants noted that post length impacted their engagement, where they were less likely to react strongly with longer posts. Others generally referred to posts that were "bland" (R3=0.65*), "calmer" (R3-0.41), or "falling short" (R3=.55*). These kinds of considerations could explain why there were no distinct partisan lines in the factor array. In other words, the Angered Constituent described being less reactive to posts that did not catch their eye or required too much time to fully process and engage, regardless of the post's political orientation. This suggests that these teachers were most reactive to quickly identifiable posts—like when they included the images of familiar political figures.

However, participants in this group explicitly referenced one post in ways that contrasted the other posts by politicians. Six of the eight participants in this group identified themselves as Left-leaning and explicitly mentioned having weaker reactions to posts published by politicians with whom they felt aligned, like Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (Item 36) during their interviews. When asked further about this discrepancy, one participant said during their interview:

> AOC's going to tell you how it is. She's not going to be real biased…if you see a George Floyd post from AOC, it's not going to be an attack. She's not going to politicize it or something… you're not going to see buzzwords out of AOC. (R3=0.65*).

By directing their frustration toward only Right-leaning politicians and assuming the absence of an agenda on the Left, it seems the Angered Constituent directed their frustration toward politicians they disagreed with but were willing to overlook possible politicization and bias present in posts by leaders with whom they agreed. For example, the participant quoted above later went on to say that Ocasio Cortez uses her social media platforms "more like her personal page." By contrasting Ocasio Cortez's social media use with Trump's, who this participant said is "using his platform to attack the Left…and just trying to appeal to his base." (R3=0.65*), this participant overlooked the ways Ocasio Cortez is also appealing to her base in her tweet—proposing paths forward and critiquing any endorsements of maintaining the status quo. While this teacher recognized that unlike the post from Trump, the tweet from Ocasio Cortez did not name call or berate anyone, to frame her social media accounts as a "personal page" denies the ways she also uses her account for political purposes. The participants in this group's comments suggested that

the teacher's political subjectivity shaped what they interpreted as biased or agenda-setting. By offering differing interpretations of the messages from political leaders they opposed compared to and the messages from politicians with whom these participants agreed demonstrates how the Angered Constituent's political subjectivity shapes their reactions.

Inverted Reactions

Like the Dismissive Scroller, the Angered Constituent was also a bipolar factor. One participant negatively loaded onto this factor. Again, the presence of a negative loading sort suggests that this participant reacted to the items oppositely—sorting posts from politicians like Trump and Loeffler as eliciting a weak reaction. In contrast, posts from politicians like AOC garnered a stronger reaction. However, this teacher described their justification for sorting in very similar ways. Specifically, while others reacted most strongly to posts by politicians with whom they disagreed, this teacher described not reacting to those politician's posts. Because this teacher said they were familiar and frustrated by the rhetoric of Trump and Loeffler, they did not react to posts about them. They said, "Trump is full of lies half the time, and Loeffler—I really don't like her either…I guess it's just the people. If it's people I don't really care for, I just kind of brush them off" (R3= -0.52). The participant recognized that their muted reactions to these figures are rooted in their dislike of them. This teacher also said they generally felt like most U.S. politicians engaged online in similar ways—making claims or arguments without sufficient evidence. This participant, however, had stronger reactions to the posts from politicians with whom they agreed. They said politicians like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez are "not doing the usual politician kind of stuff." Their posts

would, therefore, get stronger reactions from them online "because they're more aligned with the ideas [they] think about" (R3= -0.52). As their descriptions suggest, this teacher drew on similar logic and thinking to sort the posts. However, their reactions to the posts were inverted—reacting strongly to posts they agreed with or that resonated with them, and remaining unfazed by the ongoing, albeit problematic rhetoric they identified in politicians they disliked.

Conclusion

My analysis of the generated factor arrays and the written and interview responses from participants suggests that there is no universally shared way teachers react to posts online. Instead, there are many forces that shape how teachers react when consuming social media content. Significantly, many of these teachers engaged with the posts in ways informed by their political subjectivity. The Curious Consolidator gathered evidence and well-articulated claims to solidify, bolster, and refine their perspectives. The Dismissive Scroller relied on their already established views to dismiss posts that were reductionist or simplistic and thus framed social media posts as failing to sufficiently advance the conversations. The Angered Constituent resisted harmful rhetoric shared by politicians and was frustrated by elected leaders who fail to advocate for change. While political and partisan alignment was present in each of these groups, *how* it informed these teachers' reactions were different and thus highlights the complex and nuanced ways a teacher's political subjectivity informs their reactions online. In alignment with Foucauldian thought, it seems the discourses of political subjectification function differently for different teachers.

Having engaged with these three groups of teachers and analyzed their responses, I wonder how discourses of agency function differently for each of these groups. For example, while none of the participants specifically name a responsible party for advancing racial justice, it seems their responses allude to different responsible parties.

The Curious Consolidator seemed to focus on their own agency for advancing change. They engaged with the posts in ways that suggested they felt individuals could leverage social media for change. This group of teachers described collecting and gathering posts that they said had a capacity to change other people's perspectives. In other words, the Curious Consolidator may be viewing social media as a space for change at the individual level—allowing them, as a user, to share posts that could change the opinions and views of other users.

Meanwhile, the Dismissive Scroller was more focused on systemic change. They described needing to disrupt and dismantle systems, so it is possible they were less interested in changing the minds of individuals online and were more interested in on-the-ground advocacy for justice. Instead, perhaps the Dismissive Scroller views social media as a space to mobilize people for more radical change, circulating posts that advocate for systemic restructuring through tangible, offline grassroots efforts.

Finally, the Angered Constituent directed their frustration at elected leaders they viewed as responsible for creating change. Rather than attending to their own agency as social media users or thinking about grassroots efforts, perhaps these teachers viewed politicians as the people capable of necessary change through legal action. These potential differences in how change and racial justice are realized could undergird why these three groups reacted to the posts so differently.

I conducted a series of correlations between these factor groups and the participants' disclosed demographic information and Knowles's (2018) CivID Scale, but I calculated no noteworthy relationships (I present these correlations and some additional description in Appendix G). However, when looking at the groups qualitatively, I want to highlight a few points. My analysis of these groups suggests that gendered and racialized experiences seem to shape reactions. While this was not a central aspect of my project, it is worth noting. For example, the Curious Consolidators were all white and mostly women teachers who described reacting strongly to posts many of the participants of color found to be reductionist and simplistic. This dissonance reflects larger narratives around allyship, and the emotional labor too often demanded of traditionally marginalized populations to teach white people about experienced injustice. The Dismissive Scroller group included several participants who are members of historically marginalized groups—including participants who are women, genderqueer, Black, and Latinx. The demographics of this group could explain why they were more likely to point to systems of oppression—having lived and embodied knowledge of these persistent injustices. While these relationships require further exploration, I think it is notable that other aspects of these teachers' subjectivities surfaced to shape their engagement with these social media posts.

My findings offer new language and thinking around how teachers engage and react online by naming what Foucault termed discursive formations which function to make some performances more legible. The three identified groups suggest that, as political subjects who are being and becoming online, there is significant variance and complexity in responding to political information on social media. In response to these

findings, I echo questions emerging from media studies, which ask “is it possible to be truly political in a system that grants users with only a limited set of actions, fosters semblance, and favors superficiality over genuine engagement?” (Petrina, 2016, p. 31). The recognition that social media offers primarily superficial forms of political engagement that give the illusion of material change is important. However, the ways these social studies teachers’ react online is particularly significant because they have an active role in engaging with and teaching students about the political and social world. Their political agency becomes particularly legible when they walk into a classroom. While these teachers’ time online is tangled up with various perceptions of agency and performativity, as teachers their agency and capacity for change potentially disrupts the notions that one’s political engagement on social media is limited or superficial when they take what they have learned and consumed into the classroom.

CHAPTER 6

TEACHING WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Introduction

This chapter examines how the participating teachers described using the provided social media posts in their classrooms. After sorting the social media posts based on their personal reactions, I asked the teachers to sort the collection of 42 posts again based on which posts they would likely use in their classrooms—on a scale of most likely (+4) to least likely (-4). My factor analysis for this round of sorting generated three different groups of teachers who sorted the items in similar ways. Again, these different groups were each represented by an idealized factor array that served as the basis for my analysis (Factor Arrays are available in Appendix F). To fully engage with the factor arrays, I relied on the crib-sheet method (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This method helped me identify which social media posts one group indicated they were more likely to use than the other groups, which posts one group was less likely to use than the other groups, and which posts the teachers commonly placed in similar spots on the Q-sort field across the three groups. In short, I looked for moments of consensus and dissensus across the three factor arrays

Worthy of note is that the three factors my analysis generated were significantly correlated, meaning the statistical relationship between the different groups exceeded the ± 0.40 threshold for significance (see Table 6). These correlations suggest that the groups were not as distinct as the groups created when the teachers sorted the posts according to

Table 6
Factor Score Correlations

	Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**
Factor 1	1	0.50	0.54
Factor 2	0.50	1	0.57
Factor 3	0.54	0.57	1

their personal reactions. Instead, my factor analysis indicates the presence of some underlying commonality or similarity—these three groups of teachers overlap in some significant way. These overlapping, correlated factors are likely the result of the eight confounded sorts in the data. Again, a confounded sort refers to any participant's sort that significantly loaded onto more than one factor. As I described in Chapter 3, I interpret the presence of these confounders as indicative of the messy partiality and hybridity of subjectivity. When a participant loads onto multiple groups, it suggests they constructed their responses in ways similar to more than one of the generated groups. When I ran the factor analysis and excluded all confounded sorts, the correlations between the three factors decreased, and the relationships were no longer statistically significant across groups. While this offers a clearer picture of what makes these three groups distinct, it does not fully account for how this group of 29 teachers engaged with these posts. It denies the complexity of the often overlapping and, at times, dissonant ways these teachers thought about including these social media posts in their classrooms. When I included the confounded sorts for any of the factors onto which they significantly loaded, the three groups became even more significantly correlated and increasingly difficult to distinguish. Therefore, I felt it was essential to conduct my analysis and interpretation including the confounded sorts for only the factor onto which they most significantly loaded.

Additionally, to better identify the commonalities across the three groups, I conducted a second order factor analysis. I took the three generated factor arrays and ran

a new factor analysis, inputting each factor array as a new, hypothetical sort. This process generated a new factor array that I could analyze and interpret to identify what subject position may be underlying the three factors I initially generated. By conducting a second order factor analysis, I was able to identify underlying, shared discourses across the three original factors. As I will describe later in this chapter, I interpret the subject position emergent from the second order factor as superseding the three original factors.

To interpret both the three original factor arrays and the second order factor array as subject positions, I turned to the qualitative data I collected. By drawing on their written post-sorting questions and the interviews with participants who most significantly loaded onto each factor, I interpreted what made each group of teachers distinct from the others. Importantly, the written responses provided during this round of sorting were generally broader than the responses offered after sorting based on their reactions. For instance, many of the participants made categorical statements about the posts as a whole, rather than pointing to specific posts and offering detailed explanations. Additionally, most of the teachers offered broader commentaries about what teachers should and should not do in the classroom, ways social media could be incorporated into teaching, and what kinds of thinking they want their students to do. In other words, their responses were often less tied to specific posts or the collection of the posts as a whole—instead they often shared their views on teaching and teachers. As such, while this chapter identifies some of the posts specifically mentioned, my analysis primarily draws upon some of the broader descriptions offered by the participants.

In crafting the narratives for these various groups of teachers, I looked at how they described kinds of posts they would likely use and why, which allowed me to

unpack the discourse(s) each group most readily drew upon and which performance of "teacher" most clearly crystalized for each group as they thought about using social media content in the classroom. When looking at the second order factor array, I also referred back to the participants' written responses and interview transcripts to identify similarities in the ways the teachers across the different groups were describing and justifying their sorting of the social media posts. In so doing, I identified what unified these groups of teachers—what primarily informed how they could imagine incorporating and teaching with social media posts. By moving back and forth between the original three factor arrays and the second order factor array I was able to determine how these unifying perspectives manifested slightly differently across the three groups. In the following sections, I start by emphasizing the commonalities and consensus across the three identified groups, which was informed by my second order factor analysis. I then present my narrative interpretation of the three different factors, interpreting them as possible, idealized subject positions available to these participating teachers.

Teaching with Social Media

I have included the participants' factor loading following any of their quotations to give a sense of the participants' overall similarity to the subject position described. For example, "T1=0.81" indicates that the participant's sort correlated with the first teaching-based factor (T1) at 0.81. Additionally, an asterisk (*) following the factor loading identifies participants who more purely loaded onto that factor. Again, I considered the participant's sort "pure" when the difference between the sort's highest loading factor and its second-highest loading factor was greater than twice the standard error (0.30). Table 7 provides the demographics of the participants for each factor.

Again, these three factors were significantly correlated, and thus I decided to conduct a second order factor analysis, which I describe in the following section. My analysis of the second order factor analysis suggests all of the participants were oriented to acting as a *Guide on the Side*, where they described presenting students with information and letting the students arrive at their own conclusions. Underlying the responses from all the participating teachers was a commitment to teaching approaches that they described as neutral or unbiased, often in the form of presenting both sides. That this described orientation to teaching was so commonly referenced across these participants' responses suggests that there are limited ways these teachers are able to imagine and describe using political content from social media in the social studies classroom.

After presenting the Guide on the Side perspectives shared by all of the participants, I then turn to examine the distinctions between the three factors. My second order analysis shaped my interpretation of the three factors outlined in Table 7. I conceptualize the Guide on the Side subject position in a hierarchal sequence. My analysis suggests that taking up a position as Guide on the Side may override all other subject positions. In this way, pursuing the idealized position of acting as Guide on the Side may displace other significant aspects of a teachers' subjectivity. By first identifying the common views these teachers shared, I was able to more clearly target the distinctions between the three separate factors. As the table indicates, the first factor, what I have named the *Context Provider*, is the largest group, with 62% of the participants loading onto this group (16 out of the 26 significant sorts). The second group, the *Data Debater*, is the smallest group, accounting for 15% of the participants. The third group is the

Critical Confronter, which included 23% of the significant sorts. I present the three factors as slight variations of the predominant way—as a Guide on the Side—that these teachers imagined engaging students with social media content.

Table 7
Participant Demographics by Teaching Factor

Characteristics	Guide on the Side		
	T1: Context Provider	**T2: Data Debater**	**T3: Critical Confronter**
N	16	4	6
Eigenvalue	9.68	1.72	1.36
Study Variance	23%	10%	11%
Gender	9 women 7 men	1 woman 3 men	1 genderqueer 4 women 1 man
Race/Ethnicity	1 Latinx 15 white	1 Black 3 white	1 Black 5 white
Teaching Experience	5 Preservice 5 New 6 Experienced	1 Preservice 3 Experienced	5 Preservice 1 New
Partisanship	11 Left-Leaning 1 Moderate 4 Right-Leaning	2 Left-Leaning 2 Moderate	5 Left-Leaning 1 Right-Leaning
CivID Orientation	6 Critical 8 Liberal 2 Multiple	1 Liberal 1 Conservative 2 Multiple	2 Critical 1 Liberal 1 Conservative 2 Multiple

Guide on the Side

I first present how these teachers uniformly talked about incorporating these social media posts into their teaching. Drawing on my qualitative analysis of the participants' responses to the post-sort questions, I identified some of the prominent tropes of social studies teaching that emerged in their answers and thus informed and constrained how these teachers could imagine engaging students with social media content. I have grouped these common clusters of discourses under the positioning of the *Guide on the Side* (King, 1993), where the teacher's "role is to *facilitate* students'

interaction with the material and with each other in their knowledge-producing endeavor" (p. 30). This proposed teaching position is likely rooted in constructivist models of learning, which posits that learning happens when students are given opportunities to construct their own knowledge around a topic. But the responses offered by participants suggest that acting as a Guide on the Side is shaped by the discourse of liberalism. As Knowles (2018) noted, teachers espousing a liberal orientation to social studies education tend to emphasize open classroom climates, "where students are encouraged to make up their own minds, express opinions, bring up current political events, express and discuss differing opinions and present several sides of an issue" (p. 77). In short, these teachers collectively described presenting students with information and supporting them in analyzing and engaging with the embedded content—rather than dictating particular interpretations or understandings—as the students work to form their own stance on a specific topic. I interpret the dominance of this described performance as reflective of Foucault's (1975/1995) exploration of normalization in that these teachers' responses center on a particular norm of teaching—notably a norm that often shapes teachers into docile subjects. Whether through disciplinary power structures (1975/1995) or through the subtle nudging of governmentality (1978/1991), I argue the discursive formations around teaching have produced a particular narrative that is familiar and readily accessed by the teachers who participated in this study.

Urgent and Necessary Work

Across their responses, all of these teachers saw the value and need for helping students interpret the messages they consume online. Each participant answered the following question: What do you think is a teacher's role in how students make sense of

social and political issues on their own social media feeds? They unanimously noted it was essential to help students unpack what they were consuming—working to critically engage with the content rather than accept it at face value. The vast majority of these teachers specifically named digital literacy and media literacy as vital skill sets to incorporate into classroom teaching. For example, one participant said:

> I think teachers have a very serious responsibility to incorporate digital literacy skills in their classrooms. We live in a digital world, and many people get their news through social media and other digital sources. We need to teach students to think critically about those sources just as we would with a text-based/written source. (T3=0.64)

This teacher described the emergence of digital media as an urgent extension of how teachers currently teach their students to consume traditional media critically. This sentiment was echoed across the participating teachers' responses. In particular, these teachers emphasized the need to help students assess the credibility of social media posts and various claims made on their feeds. For example, one participant said, teachers should be "making sure [students] are using media literacy skills to ensure that they are looking at reliable sources and information" (T1=0.41). Another teacher said, "I think we have a role in helping [students] understand the credibility of sources and ways to detect bias" (T2=0.74*). Seven teachers referred to fake news to further justify and explain the need to teach about credibility. Additionally, these teachers said that they relied on their own assessment of a post's credibility when deciding which posts they were likely to include in their teaching. One teacher said, "credibility was the biggest factor for me. I do not want students to be indulged in information that is not factual" (T1=0.41). For this

teacher, students should not waste time with erroneous or "not factual" information, and so they said it was important to screen the posts by attending to the credibility of the presented claims. The consistent attention to credibility is significant. It points to a perceived urgency to incorporate social media in the classroom to address what these teachers identified as necessary skills for interacting with information in the current digitally mediated political and social landscape. One teacher said, "media literacy is so important in today's society, so teaching the students that is an important thing" (T2=0.60). The reference to "today's society" framed the need for media literacy as particularly relevant or urgent in the current moment. In other words, it seems these teachers assumed that digital and media literacy skills could alleviate political polarization. For instance, one teacher said:

> As a teacher, we need to help our students understand the need for credibility, the need for a deeper historical understanding, and the need for open communication with others. I fear that too many young adults are too willing to shut down conversations without hearing any other person's thoughts. As a teacher, I make it a goal to encourage my students to engage in discourse and have a willingness to listen to others. (T1-0.57)

This teacher's comment, and many similar responses provided by the teachers, reflects a commitment to deliberative democratic practices, which foreground open dialogue as students engage with diverse perspectives (see Knowles & Clark, 2018). Because the current landscape is contentious and polarizing, these teachers believed supporting students in their assessment of social media content could alleviate some of the persistent challenges of democratic life.

Other teachers focused on the ways students are increasingly engaging online and felt that students should be able to identify how their time online shapes and is shaped by their thinking offline. One of the participating teachers wrote, "I think it's important that students are encouraged to think about how posts they see affect their thinking and outlook, and the extent to which things they see are designed to elicit specific emotions and actions" (T1=0.63). This comment may indicate that the teacher wanted to help students trace some of their affective responses to online content by attending to the ways people intentionally produce content to elicit particular responses. Another teacher noted that "if students learn to approach [political and social] issues with reason, respect for others' opinions, and empathy, then they will be able to take these skills with them as they scroll through their own social media feeds. (T1=0.67). Here, the teacher described modeling how to engage with opposing views and dissonant information in that classroom with the hope that students could easily transfer such skills when they consume information online. In short, this teacher described what the research on contentious discussions would label an open classroom climate. These kinds of comments emphasized the ways a students' online engagement impacts how they make sense of and interact with the world. I interpret these comments as being tangled up in liberal discourses, which prioritize the tolerance and inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences. As such, these teachers could be describing attempts to eliminate or disrupt the barriers they perceive as preventing robust engagement with the differing norms, values, and perspectives of a pluralistic society.

Present and Discuss

The notion of being a Guide on the Side often took the form of what I have termed "present and discuss," where the teacher imagined presenting the social media posts to students and facilitating some kind of discussion around them. Most of these teachers said they thought about a post's capacity to elicit student discussion as a criterion for how likely they would be to use a particular post. The teachers consistently noted their desire for fruitful discussion, saying things like they were looking for social media "posts that [were] accessible and engaging but also [could] facilitate productive discussions" (T1=0.78*), posts that included "a thought that could prompt a class discussion" (T1=0.54), or posts that were "interesting enough to spark a really good discussion" (T3=0.51*). Again, this consistent return to how discussion-worthy a post was highlights current educational discourses which value student discussion and deliberation and suggests these teachers are significantly entrenched in the idealized vision of teachers who deftly facilitate engaging and dynamic discussions.

While the participant reactions described above indicated teachers' interest in facilitating worthwhile discussions, it's also important to note that participants also talked about posts in terms of how unhelpful they would be to facilitating class discussion. For example, one teacher said, "if I thought something would cause serious issues in the classroom--meaning it would cause more shouting than academic discussion--I would immediately go against it" (T2=0.40). By distinguishing between "shouting" and an "academic discussion," this teacher seems to be referencing the long-standing impulse for teachers to siphon off the emotional or affective dimensions of political discussion to prioritize rational, evidence-based arguments (for alternative imaginings, see Garrett &

Alvey, 2020; Crocco et al., 2018; Boler, 1999). This attention to containing the emotional dynamics of the discussions was a typical framing for including posts that could foster discussion. In many ways, this framing was likely well-intentioned. As one teacher noted, they felt it was important to focus on "what posts would allow for open discussion without alienating some of [their] students" (T1-0.57). Because many of the participants referenced concerns about posts being “triggering” or “overly damaging” for students to view in class, I assumed that these teachers were attending to the experience of their Black students. I recognized that as a justifiable pursuit—particularly since these posts all dealt explicitly with debates around Black lives and racial justice. But, it is equally likely these kinds of comments are referencing a desire to not alienate students who support Trump, for example, or students who do not support the tenets of the Black Lives Matter movement. While I think attending to *who* is in the classroom and how various social media posts might alienate them is always significant, which students a teacher caters a lesson to has noteworthy implications for the kinds of discussions teachers are willing to facilitate. In regard to Black lives and racial justice, the stakes are high. Nevertheless, the common sentiment across the responses from these teachers was around what made a discussion productive or constructive. For instance, one teacher said:

> If I want to foster cordial and constructive conversations in my classroom, then I think it is important to bring in materials that model cordial and constructive voices. I think that if I were to show students the posts with extreme and oftentimes uninformed voices, then it could send an implicit message that extreme and uninformed comments are okay to use during our conversations. (T1=0.67)

Here, the teacher expressed a desire to avoid students expressing "extreme and uninformed" views in the classroom to keep the discussion "cordial and constructive." Several other teachers described wanting to eliminate posts that used divisive rhetoric to avoid tacitly endorsing that kind of rhetoric. In other words, these teachers do not want to have to say a perspective is wrong or unwelcome in the classroom, so they searched for posts that would minimize the risk of having to do so.

Further, many of the participating said they wanted to avoid disclosing their own political perspectives. For example, one participant said:

> The teacher's role is to discuss these posts with students but in an unbiased way. I don't think the teacher should disclose their own views. I think it is up to the teacher to present information and let the students decide for themselves. (T1=0.66)

To be unbiased, this teacher described presenting information and letting students arrive at their own conclusion as if presenting information alone is somehow neutral. Many teachers described this approach in their written responses. The aversion to political disclosure and persistent pursuits of "neutrality" in the social studies classroom this teacher described has been well documented (e.g., Geller, 2020; McAnulty, 2020; Journell, 2016). Again, the impulse to work toward neutrality has become a discourse which has inscribed itself onto these teachers and produces them into a certain kind of docile subject. In the next two sections, I highlight how these kinds of comments reflect larger discourses around teacher neutrality in the classroom, where the teacher works to suppress their own political views by presenting "both sides" of a topic or issue.

Suppressing Political Views

Many of the kinds of written and interview responses I categorized as Guide on the Side comments indicated that their orientation to using or not using the posts in their classroom was related to their political views. Specifically, nearly all of the teachers said that if they had a strong reaction to a post, they were less likely to use it with their students. One teacher noted they were surprised by how different their own opinions were from what they would show to students, saying, "I need to remain more factual in a classroom than just voicing what I think is best. What stood out to me is how different my opinions are from what I would actually teach in a classroom" (T1=0.41). Therefore, this teacher described actively presenting "more factual" content that does not align with their own views and opinions. My analysis indicated that these teachers were consistently distancing themselves from their own reactions and opinions when they selected posts to use in their teaching, often wanting to avoid, disrupt, or counter their own reactions when selecting posts for classroom analysis. For almost all of these teachers, this move was about avoiding posts they found overly emotional or provocative. For example, one teacher described how many of their personal reactions were based on those that elicited anger and frustration. When thinking about the classroom, this teacher went on to say, "Thankfully, I would say I'm a far more reasonable, calm, and thoughtful person as a teacher than I am as a 'regular' person where I'm enraged by many of the posts" (T1=0.78*). The inclusion of "thankfully" signals that this teacher does not feel they should include their emotional reactions and is thus grateful to be able to bound them out when teaching. Additionally, this teacher's comments indicate a perception that as a teacher they are different than who they perceive the "regular" public to be—a public of

quickly emotional and irrational people. Many of the comments made by the participating teachers suggested they believed their roles as teachers were easily separated and distinct from how they engaged and responded to political content in their lives outside the classroom. Suppressing their own reactions was consistently described as not being difficult.

Significantly, however, as my analysis in the previous chapter suggests, the teachers' reactions were often informed by their political subjectivity. In this way, there seems to be a relationship between the ways these teachers described avoiding posts they reacted strongly to and posts with which they agreed or disagreed with politically. In other words, by removing posts that elicited strong reactions they—intentionally or not—would be eliminating posts with certain partisan leanings. For those who described reacting most strongly to posts they agreed, they may risk over-correcting by overemphasizing opposing views. Similarly, those who reacted most strongly to posts with which they disagreed, may risk eliminating oppositional views. While avoiding some perspectives in the classroom is not inherently problematic—particularly if those perspectives are harmful or dehumanizing—these descriptions are contrary to their descriptions of working toward neutrality in their teaching.

These teachers' described desire to suppress their own political subjectivity when teaching is reflected in Foucault's work. For instance, Foucault's work invites an attention to the ways particular subject positions fail to accommodate certain performances. In this case, the performance of teacher—specifically in the form of Guide on the Side—does not accommodate the teachers' political subjectivity. The discursive formations that shape the recognizable and ideal "social studies teacher" performance

may exclude or, at a minimum, obscure an explicit performance of a teacher's political subjectivity. In this way, the persistent descriptions of pursuing neutrality and attempting to exclude their political subjectivity reflect the ways the performance of teacher does not afford political performances.

For the majority of these teachers, suppressing their own political subjectivity was paired with descriptions of approaches they said were neutral. For example, one teacher said, "I try to approach each topic neutrally and present all of the evidence" (T1=0.46). Another teacher said, "I wanted to pick posts that weren't as significantly biased" (T1=0.66*). One teacher mentioned that trying to remove their politics was a challenge, saying:

> I think I struggle with making sure I keep my own politics in check in the classroom. Yes, they inevitably come through to some degree—especially in this day and age. But I'm very selective about sources I show students and want to make sure they have specific value—whether they are informative, showing perspective, showing changes/continuities, making students compare, etc. (T1=0.72*)

For this teacher, there was a need to be aware of their own politics—keeping them "in check." While this teacher recognized that neutrality is impossible—saying politics inevitably come through "in this day and age"—they were intentional about source selection in an effort to provide diverse and distinct perspectives. By being selective when choosing sources, this teacher may perceive that they are keeping their politics in check and ensuring each source has a purpose. Attending to the sources a teacher uses in their classroom to examine what each piece affords or constrains is a worthwhile

pedagogical practice. Teachers ought to consider how their students might interpret the inclusion of a particular source and if there is pedagogical value in those possible interpretations. However, this heightened focus on sourcing does not eliminate the effects of a teacher's political views or perspectives. Rather, a teacher's assessment of a post or a source is likely informed by what that teacher considers credible, legitimate, or newsworthy. As such, these decisions of what to include and what not to include on the basis of their determination of "credibility" could be tied to their own political commitments—rather than the source's journalistic integrity, for example (e.g., Clark, Schmeichel, & Garrett, 2021).

A small group of the teachers justified their neutrality in ways that suggested it was a strategic way to navigate the increased contention and ongoing political polarization. One teacher said, "if I want kids to engage with me on BLM, especially white kids who have never considered themselves as privileged before, I have to weed out the more inflammatory ideas and create a middle ground where they can meet me" (T1=0.54). Five other teachers mentioned this strategic move, wanting to present information in ways that invite students to expand their views rather than digging their heels into partisan politics. A different teacher echoed this strategy, saying:

> I wouldn't use posts that are overtly political from the get-go—pushing a certain party or resulting in me having to immediately discredit a certain party or prominent individual that represents that party. This results in kids who hear "this person is a Republican or Democrat" switching on or off. I like the more abstract posts that can be slowly built upon so the kids can then critique crazy posts from the likes of Donald Trump (T1=0.78*)

This subset of teachers described strategically using social media in ways that provided an illusion of neutrality—selecting social media posts that could get students engaged in the discussion without immediately shutting them down while still maintaining a particular goal or orientation toward Black lives and racial justice. However, these kinds of strategic framings of neutrality were the exception among these teachers. The vast majority of the relied on more pervasive views of neutrality, where students would engage with multiple perspectives before picking their side on the issue, which I discuss in detail in the following section.

Both Sides-ism

Across the written and interview responses, the participating teachers described presenting “both sides” of the Black Lives Matter movement. In other words, a teacher might show students a post supporting police defunding and pair it with a critique of defunding the police. Often these contrasting positions were divided along partisan lines and thus teachers often described showing students a Left-leaning view and a Right-leaning view. While the processes and discourses that have allowed teachers to think presenting “both sides” is an unqualified and unquestioned good are complex and hard to pin down, journalism is one field that has historically valued the presentation of both sides of an issue. As a field, journalistic norms value “fair and balanced” reporting. However, as Phillips (2018) noted, this practice can become problematic when positions that are "false, manipulative, dehumanizing, and in many cases not worth reporting at all, are given an equal platform to positions that are factually true, relevant to the public interest, and unquestionably newsworthy" (p. 12). In short, both sides-ism risks false equivalency. Within education, the practice of presenting both sides has been critiqued

for its propensity to create false equivalencies and reduce complex issues down to “us versus them” binaries (e.g., Garrett, Schmeichel, McAnulty & Janis, 2018; Geller, 2020; McAnulty, 2020). Sixteen of the participants described thinking about how they could present both sides when selecting social media posts they were likely to use. For example, one teacher said:

> I think it is our role to share social media posts from both sides of the political and social spectrum. We need to provide students with this information and let them come to conclusions, not trying to impose our own beliefs. (T1=0.42)

This comment, which many teachers echoed, highlights how presenting both sides was described as an objective practice that allows students to arrive at their own conclusions. A different teacher said, "I would likely pair many of the tweets, for example, together as a contrast for a discussion-based lesson" (T3=0.64*). For this teacher, pairing contrasting tweets may be seen to function to provide students with opposing perspectives and avoids a narrowly focused or biased discussion. Other teachers described wanting to recognize that both political parties are guilty of spreading misinformation. For instance, one teacher said, "Teachers should usually be unbiased and not take a side…we have to be able to point out inaccuracies in social media posts on both sides" (T3=0.51*). Here, both sides-ism assumes the spread of inaccurate information is balanced across partisan lines and must be equally addressed.

It is important to note that a smaller group of these teachers described presenting diverse perspectives more generally was an important pedagogical choice. For these teachers, giving a variety of perspectives was not explicitly tied to neutrality or objectivity. Instead, it may reflect a commitment to liberal education, offering students a

variety of perspectives that reflect life in a pluralistic society. For example, one of the teachers said, "I think it is important to share with students a variety of perspectives when it comes to issues like this…then discussing them in class" (T2=0.60). This teacher never commented on wanting to avoid partisanship or attempting to be neutral but instead emphasized the value of having diverse perspectives available for students to discuss. Another teacher described both sides-ism as a way to move beyond accepting social media posts at face value. This teacher felt teachers need to "help [students] research topics from both sides rather than just trusting a meme on the internet" (T1=0.46). This description alludes to having students research the claims made by various memes or social media posts to interrogate the validity of claims. This suggests an alignment with pursuing critical thinking, media literacy skills, and the sourcing of social media claims, which are elements of social studies pedagogy that are likely promoted in many teacher education programs and supported in social studies education research. While these perspectives were less common across all of teachers' comments, they represent the ways there was likely some nuance to how teachers conceptualize and justify the inclusion of "both sides".

Nevertheless, the problem with relying so heavily on presenting both sides is that these teachers often expressed goals and aims that were unlikely to be achieved by providing equal weight to polarized perspectives. For example, one teacher said, "I wanted to ensure that they saw both sides and understood why this movement happened in the first place" (T3=0.55). It is unclear how presenting both sides—ostensibly including a "side" that recognizes the existence of racial injustice and a "side" that undermines or critiques the movement—helps students understand why the Black Lives

Matter movement began. This tension between presenting both sides and the stated goals of a lesson surfaced in many teachers' comments.

Further, as I read these comments across the written responses, I recognized that the majority of these teachers were describing the presence of some unstated, discoverable truth. For example, one teacher said, "I think the teacher does have a role in helping students to identify truth…A teacher's job isn't to change opinions, but to make sure that [students'] opinions are founded in real information, and not fake news" (T1=0.59*). The notion that there is “real information” that can help students uncover what is true was pervasive.

While there are many possible reasons these teachers articulated presenting “both sides” in pursuit of truth, one possible explanation is that these teachers assumed—through investigating and interrogating both sides—their students would lean toward justice. For example, most teachers described selecting posts to incorporate in the classroom that they felt would combat misunderstandings about the Black Lives Matter movement by providing information and context. Additionally, no teachers denied the need for racial justice in policing. I interpret this trend in these teachers’ comments as (intentionally or not) framing the need for racial justice as self-evident and true—the only position supported with factual evidence. In other words, it seemed there was an assumption that if students were shown the *right* information or were provided with facts that countered less factual perspectives, they would realize the need for racial justice.

This assertion was supported through a closer examination of one participant’s written and interview response. In describing the role of teachers to support students in examining social media, this teacher said “I greatly believe that it is our job to confront

students with social issues, to investigate social issues, to see what they think about things and understand how they face their thinking, and to challenge them in their thinking" (T2=0.74*). The goal, as described here, was to assess students' current thinking about a social issue and then challenge that thinking. Across this teacher's responses, the investigation of the social issue was described through the presentation of both sides and investigating the claims. During my follow-up interview with this teacher, I was curious if they were comfortable with students arriving at any number of conclusions after investigating "both sides". During our conversation, I asked "if you have students investigate information and gather evidence, in the case of Black lives, is there a wrong answer? At the end of the day, is there a wrong perspective for students to take after investigating these posts?" The teacher said "If [a student] can sit there and say that Black lives are not under attack and that police are not doing this, and [they] can support it, then I can't change their thinking" (T2=0.74*). The teacher's use of this perspective as their example in response to my question suggests that the goal would be for students to see racialized police violence as an issue. In this way, perhaps the teacher had a particular perspective in mind when they said teachers should "challenge [students] in their thinking". However their response to my question also suggested that this teacher recognized the possibility that after presenting information that challenges their thinking, some students may *still* deny the existence of racial injustice in policing. This teacher went on to say, "at the end of the day I feel that people are gonna have their opinions, and all we can do is try to present them with information and then see how they wrestle with that to understand it" (T2=0.74*). Therefore, on a different level, this teacher seemed to be communicating that offering students facts is the best or only option available to

teachers to combat such significant misunderstandings that lack sufficient evidence, saying this approach is "all we can do". I interpret this impulse—to present both sides and assume facts will lead students to the truth—as connected to their descriptions of being politically neutral or objective in the classroom.

There are some issues in social studies that lend themselves to presenting both sides but there are others that don't. I interpret these teachers' descriptions of presenting both sides as tethered to an assumption that doing so would provide students with a clearer distinction between a factual perspective and unsubstantiated perspective—in this case, a view that identifies racial injustice and one that denies it. But this urge to present "both sides" of complex political and social issues must be disrupted because the move fails to recognize that the relationship between someone believing something is true and it being supported by facts is often muddy. As Doctorow (2017) pointed out "we're not living through a crisis about what is true, we're living through a crisis about how we know whether something is true. We're not disagreeing about facts, we're disagreeing about *epistemology*" (para. 6). In this way, presenting both sides to help students arrive at a justice-oriented truth is unlikely to be successful without also unpacking *how* people justify and defend ideas they have accepted as truth. Teachers must also explore the frameworks that inform a student's conception of truth. I think some of the teachers recognized this need—as the previously quoted teacher said, teachers must "understand how [students] face their thinking". In other words, students do not always need more information, but they may need support in understanding *why* they might accept some information over other information.

School Context Matters

Another possible explanation for the neutral posturing and descriptions of both sides-ism is that most of these teachers noted the significance of context when teaching. Recognizing Black Lives Matter and many of the related topics are considered contentious by many, these teachers worried about how various stakeholders might respond. In particular, the teachers referenced the context of their schools, their administration, their students' parents as significant forces in their decision making. It is also worth noting that the prompt for this sort was vague. The teachers were asked "how likely would you be to use the post (or the content of the post) in your classroom?". I did not specify any parameters for the use and thus left it open for the teachers' interpretation. Six participants noted that their use of posts would depend on the lesson topic, for example, or how easily they might be able to incorporate the posts into their lessons. These comments are important because these teachers may have been conceptualizing lessons in disparate ways and thus sorting them with various contexts in mind. Nevertheless, the teachers commonly mentioned how the school's climate and their students' parents shaped their decisions.

One teacher said, "you have to take into consideration the climate of your school population" (T1=0.46). Another participant said, "I think a lot of what I can teach is dependent on the political and social climate at a given time" (T1=0.42). This teacher went on to say:

> The bottom line is that I want my students to get a well-rounded worldview on these issues, but I also don't want to deal with any backlash from parents—even with me having a lot of support from my administration (T1-0.42)

Here, the teacher explicitly named why the school context matters—parents. Another teacher echoed this tension, saying:

> We should be addressing these things in the classroom, but due to fear of my administration and backlash from white parents, it is almost impossible to critique the divisions in our society without being seen as anti-police, anti-Trump, or anti-American (T1=0.81*)

The current social and political landscape was significant in how these teachers could imagine teaching about racial injustice. When selecting posts for the classroom, a different teacher said it was essential to find "things I wouldn't get in trouble for using! That is always on my mind as a teacher" (T1=0.72*). The fear of backlash or disciplinary action was real for these teachers. The caution these teachers described reflects Foucault's (1975/1995) examination of disciplinary power. Foucault highlighted the ways subjects take up specific performances through the perceived threat of consequence or punishment. These teachers described wanting to be cautious when designing lessons or selecting posts for teaching because of the fear of how outsiders would respond—despite seeing the value in and urgency for engaging students in these discussions.

Non-Loaders

It feels important to note that even the three teachers who did not significantly load onto a factor still echoed the sentiments of the rest of the participants I have outlined thus far. These three teachers also described trying to remain politically neutral by presenting both sides and referenced contextual considerations when making decisions. The presence of these views for participants who did not load onto a factor suggests that possible subject positions that I did not capture in my analysis may also be informed and

constrained by these tropes and discourses of teaching social studies. The avoidance of one's political views was present, as indicated by one of the three teachers' claim that "It is our role to inform, explain, and make [students] aware of the bigger issues. But we should not force our own ideas upon them." Additionally, these teachers also felt presenting multiple perspectives was an effective pedagogical strategy. One of these three teachers said:

> I believe it is important for teachers to act as providers of information (both or multiple perspectives of an event/issue) and a challenger of preconceived ideas. Pushing students to recognize and analyze opposing viewpoints can strengthen their beliefs while recognizing the issues of another.

For this teacher, the presentation of both sides can function to simultaneously help students see alternative perspectives while also strengthening their views. One of the other teachers said they selected posts “that help give a total picture, not incomplete one” because “wanting [students] to be informed about both sides of arguments is important to [them].” Again, it seems this teacher was suggesting some students have a limited view and thus being exposed to both sides is beneficial. Finally, these teachers also noted their worries about students' parents. As one of these teachers said:

> I had to think more about how my kids would react and how my kids' parents would react. I had to consider the source a little more carefully when presenting it to students, knowing that most will believe anything I show them to be true.

This teacher noted the need to account for and interrogate the source before showing students because students believe the content displayed in the classroom is true.

However, they also were accounting for the parents of students, wanting to consider how they would react to the posts shared in class.

The same considerations and justifications among teachers who did not align with any of the generated factors highlights how deeply embedded some of these positions have become for teaching social studies. In short, it reiterates the possibility that there is only one easily identifiable way to be a social studies teacher.

Imagined Students

Another common theme across the participants' responses was how these teachers imagined their students. As I turn to focus on specific posts these teachers uniformly said they were likely to use in the classroom, it is worth noting that these decisions were also informed by what they felt their students should see or which posts students would find most engaging.

Emotional Toll

A few teachers across the three groups said they considered how students might react to posts. For example, one teacher said:

> My decisions were not based on gut reactions but rather on what impact they might have on how students feel and what kind of conversations each would encourage. (T1=0.67)

The attention to "how students feel" suggests this teacher wanted to filter out images that may be difficult to process or are overly emotional. Another teacher said, "I thought more about the conclusions students might draw and how they would feel first" (T3=0.48*). By focusing on student feelings first, these teachers described prioritizing the emotional experience of engaging with this discussion. Another teacher said they posed questions

when making decisions, like "would this be too graphic? too emotional?" (T3=0.64). A different teacher asked similar questions, like "Is it 'too much'? Is it triggering?" (T3=0.67*). This attention to the emotional experience was most notable in that each group of teachers sorted Lebron James' post low. The post included a censored photo of former officer Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck (Item 41[11]). This post was thus representative of an image that would be too emotional to show students.

Assumed Unfamiliarity

Many of the teachers also made their selections based on the assumption that students may not be as familiar with some of the information circulating online. These kinds of comments presume a student deficit orientation that framed students as underinformed or less in tune with how the Black Lives Matter movement has circulated on social media. Thirteen of the twenty-six teachers made comments that suggested that they saw a difference between their knowledge and students' knowledge and identified the posts as a way for students to gain the knowledge that the teachers already have. As one teacher said, "I know that information and have heard all these quotes before, but [my students] probably haven't" (T1=0.54). This assumption that students would be less familiar was notably common across participant responses. It was the teacher's role to "introduce" new information to students. For some of these teachers, this resulted in making decisions around what they felt students *needed* to know. For instance, one teacher said, "I was thinking more about what my students would need to see or how they would be able to understand the images" (T1=0.59*). While this teacher made decisions

[11] Once again, links to access and view the referenced posts from the Q-set are provided in Appendix D.

around what information felt vital to introduce to students, they also introduced how they considered the ease with which a student could understand an image or post.

Easy to Understand

Significantly, many of the posts that the teachers unanimously ranked as most likely to be used in the classroom were heavily image-based or graphically designed. For instance, two posts most consistently ranked high across the three factor arrays and in the second order factor array were Item 4 and Item 9. Item 4 shows the graph depicting the disproportionate police shootings of Black and Brown people, and Item 9 shows the graphically designed quote from South African theologian and anti-apartheid activist Desmond Tutu. Generally, all of the participants noted that these kinds of posts are easy to understand because they are visual and engaging—or what De Vries et al. (2012) described as more vivid than plain text. When looking at the second order factor array, seven of the eight posts these teachers were most likely to use (ranked at +2, +3, or +4) included images and graphics in place of text. Of the twenty-six posts neutrally ranked (-1 to +1), nineteen were text-heavy posts—void of pictures or photographs. This reliance on graphic or visual posts over longer, text-heavy posts could reflect the focus on selecting posts that these teachers felt students could easily understand. For instance, one teacher said, "I wanted to make sure that [the posts] would make this movement and this time period easier to understand for students. I am hoping to teach middle school, and I feel like, at that age, a picture or graphic would really help [students] in [their] overall understanding. (T3=0.55). Another teacher said, "I liked the idea of using more visual social media posts…I think they would do the best job engaging students" (T1=0.63*).

Relevant Variations and Distinctions

As my analysis thus far has indicated, there was notable consensus among all of the participating teachers. I have represented this consensus as being a *Guide on the Side*. First, these teachers were uniformly committed to presenting content to students they felt could be analyzed for discussion. In this way, these social media posts functioned in much the same way as primary source analysis and inquiry-driven approaches. These findings are promising in that these teachers are uniformly committed to inviting students to engage with content and use it as evidence as they formulate positions. Each of these teachers could easily imagine using the posts to invite further investigation and analysis. Rather than taking the posts at face value, these teachers imagined students fact-checking posts, confirming claims with other sources, and comparing claims with outside evidence.

However, equally prevalent were descriptions of countering their own political views as teachers—working to take up practices they felt were more neutral, objective, or less controversial. Drawing on Foucauldian thought enables the consideration of the way that the discourses informing teachers' responses may obscure or shield other performances. This impulse for neutrality often took the form of saying they would present information with posts from both the Left and the Right, ensuring equal coverage. It seemed many teachers felt that, by investigating both sides, their students would arrive at a shared conclusion that the movement to recognize Black lives and racial injustice is warranted and justified. In short, these teachers seemed to believe that digital literacy and media literacy skills would inevitably bend toward justice.

While these commonalities undergirded all of the teachers' engagement with these social media posts, there were still some variations and distinctions that produced three

different groups of teachers. While there were significant commonalities in the ways that all of the participants described themselves as Guides on the Sides, there were some variations on how the teachers saw themselves enacting that role. I interpret these three subject positions as sub-positions—three possible ways to take up the overriding position of acting as a Guide on the Side. In the following sections I describe these three groups. First, I present the *Context Provider*, who aimed to use posts that could contextualize the various views. Then, I discuss the *Data Debater*, who focused on posts that could invite students to research and debate statistics and/or proposed policies. Finally, I describe the *Critical Confronter*, who aimed to promote more critical examinations of problematic structures. Ultimately, these three described subject positions are informed and constrained by discourses that encourage teachers to guide students from the sideline rather than being overt in their aims and goals.

The Context Provider

As reflected in this group's factor array and reiterated in the group's written responses, the Context Provider focused on posts that could give students the larger context for discussions around Black lives and police violence. These teachers described providing students with information to contextualize and make sense of the movement and its aims. For instance, one teacher said:

> I think we need to give students the background and context for issues in a concrete way (e.g., "This is redlining. Redlining is an example of systemic racism. Systemic racism is…") In addition to giving the background, we need to give them the tools to analyze sources—Is it on multiple websites? What is the motivation, author, names, dates, pictures, etc.? (T1=0.78*).

This teacher noted that some posts could introduce larger topics and how the embedded content and messages are tangled up in larger systems and structures. The Context Provider consistently described providing students with the context to help students make sense of a post and to model critical consumption on content online. For example, another teacher in this group noted that "building context would be really helpful, due to the nature of posts (they are short, often uncited, and play to emotions very often). We can help students engage posts in similar ways we engage with other texts" (T1=0.63*). These teachers mentioned pairing contextualization with other critical analysis strategies.

Additionally, this group of teachers described the posts they were most likely to use in the classroom as being a necessary foundation for discussing the topic. The four posts this group indicated they would be most likely to show students included Item 4, Item 31, Item, 27, and Item 9[12]. The Context Provider imagined showing these posts to "start conversations" (T1=0.63*). In other words, these social media posts were framed as entry points to contextualize larger discussions. Some teachers described using the posts as bell-ringers or hooks for a lesson where students would engage with different curricular materials or content. For instance, one teacher said, "Ideally, social media posts would be used in my classroom as starting points for conversations, and so the ones that seemed like good starting places for conversation were the ones I said I was most likely to use" (T1=0.67). A different teacher said, "In class, these posts would be great jumping-off points to begin conversations on a range of issues." (T1=0.78*). For the Context Provider, social media content was perceived to be able to supplement the lesson or set up for a deeper exploration of the topic on offer.

[12] The sequence of these items reflects their respective ranking, where the first two items were ranked as +4 and the second two items were ranked as +3.

Some of the teachers in this group also described contextualizing the language and messages of posts within a historical lens. For example, one teacher referenced the post from Donald Trump (Item 26) where he calls for "Law and Order." While most of the teachers in the Context Provider group said they were unlikely to use this post in the classroom, this teacher used it as an example of the historical contextualizing necessary to include some of these posts in their lessons successfully. One teacher said it was important for teachers to be:

> putting these things into their correct historical and political context. For example: students should notice when a politician pivots from protests on racial justice to focusing on riots and promoting law and order. There's a long history of politicians doing this. It's a clearly defined political strategy to play to white voters who are uncomfortable with this racial justice movement (T1=0.54).

This attention to how these social media posts could be used in the history classroom was typical for the Context Provider. These teachers' comments suggest they were thinking about how these posts could help connect their history curriculum to the current movement for racial justice. One teacher demonstrated this focus by saying, "I had to consider which posts would allow my students to easily make connections with historical events" (T1=0.57). However, this attention to broader historical connections risks getting away from the original context of the post. For example, five teachers specifically said they would use the Instagram post by @feminist that shows the Desmond Tutu quote (Item 9). They described feeling like the message was relevant to various contexts rather than explaining how the post could address current calls for racial justice. For example, one teacher said, "This is the kind of thing I would have on the wall of my classroom.

This quote is applicable in soooo many different contexts in world history. It is also a message I want students to think about" (T1=0.72*). A different participant justified using this post because “[the 2020] election just saw one of our largest turnouts of all time, but what I stressed to my students was that while most of us were happy with 67% voter turnout in this election, that meant that with all this going on, 33% of eligible voters still didn't participate” (T1=0.54). While the teacher may be alluding to the national uprising for racial justice in saying “all this going on”, the emphasis on using this post was to encourage voter turnout. In this way, this post and its message are framed as easily applicable to a variety of contexts more than a way to explicitly address the Black Lives Matter movement.

When discussing why they were unlikely to show students specific posts (see Item 5, Item 10, Item 34, and Item 21[13]), the group was somewhat divided. Some discussed credibility when providing general descriptions of how they sorted the posts. For instance, one teacher said they generally did not "want to show [their] students a story that has been chopped up into pieces to fit whatever agenda the poster has" (T1=0.66*). For this teacher, credibility was connected to issues of context. Posts that did not provide enough information were considered less worthy of student engagement. Some of these teachers specifically identified Breitbart (Item 5) and TurningPointUSA (Item 34) as less reputable sources. The rest of the group said they were unlikely to use posts they felt were overly divisive. For instance, one of these teachers said:

> I don't want to encourage divisive dialogue that attacks viewpoints in disagreement with one side or the other. In teaching for democratic ideals, I hope

[13] Similarly, these posts are listed in order of their respectively unlikelihood of being used in the classroom, with the first two listed items being ranked as -4 and the second two ranked at -3.

> my students will not do this, so I will limit bringing models of it in my classroom. (T1=0.63*)

This teacher, and other teachers who made similar comments, identified some posts as being "inflammatory" (T1=0.72*), "too provocative" (T1=0.66*), or would "detract/distract from the subsequent message or lesson" (T1=0.78*). Because these teachers wanted to provide students with a foundational context to further discuss and engage with Black Lives Matter, some posts were either not credible enough or were too polarizing to be productive.

The Data Debater

Like the Context Provider, the Data Debater aimed to give students a working knowledge of the current social and political movement. However, the Data Debater made a distinction between fact-based posts and opinion-based posts. Specifically, these teachers focused on providing students with data—in the form of statistics—for students to research and debate. As one participant put it, "I thought about what [posts] we could prove through facts and then debate" (T2=0.74*). The four posts these teachers were most likely to use in their classrooms were Item 4, Item 18, Item 39, and Item 32). These teachers described using these posts because they presented data students could easily investigate.

Notably, each of these four posts includes statistical data. One participant said this was intentional, saying:

> For me, [using these posts] was about how easy it would be to predict the investigation. Like, let's see how correct and incorrect [the information] is would

> be easier to anticipate than 'this is someone's opinions and like where are they getting this from?' (T2=0.74*)

This teacher noted that the presence of statistical information is more concrete and more easily confirmed or denied. This teacher later added that these posts have "clear cut evidence or something that it is based on" (T2=0.74*). This participant elaborated on this point during an interview, saying:

> It's going to be more productive if you're building [the discussion] on "this is what the evidence is, this is what the facts say." You know? Take what you feel out of it, but this is what it says. You can choose to ignore it, or you can recognize it. (T2=0.74*)

The other teachers in this group shared similar views, particularly regarding their desire to avoid overly emotional or political posts. For example, one of the other teachers said some posts would "cause more problems in the classroom" (T2=0.40) because they appeal to emotions rather than something tangible to examine. Another teacher said these "data posts" were suitable for the classroom because they were "intellectually engaging" (T2=0.47*). This teacher's emphasis on intellectual engagement was seemingly framed in opposition to the emotional appeals found in other posts. The Data Debater was drawn to data and facts because they "can be proven or disproven" (T2=0.74*). In short, the data included in these posts could be readily fact-checked or confirmed with other sources, while opinion-based posts may be less readily assessed. For instance, these teachers described Lebron James's Instagram post contrasting Chauvin and Kaepernick kneeling (Item 41) as too emotional. One of these teachers said, "This post drives at emotion, and I think in class that would guide students" (T2=0.74*). Similarly, Item 30 shows a

ForAmerica Facebook meme that compares peaceful protestors being upset that they are being lumped "with a few bad apples" with police feeling similarly. One teacher said, "I think this post is trying to get a quick reaction" (T2=0.74*) and was thus not conducive for productive discussion or exploration. Another teacher echoed this sentiment, saying this post "could create strong opinions in class from people on both ends of the political spectrum" (T2=0.60). These teachers described these kinds of posts as already positioning students to take sides, stick to their original views, or to *react* rather than analyze. In contrast, the numbers, percentages, and statistics of the other posts offered more tangible and concrete data points for students to explore.

Worthy of note is that these teachers seemed to believe that numerical data are less biased. For example, when describing some of these highly ranked posts, one teacher wrote, "the data are not overtly political" (T2=0.47*). This teacher implied that numbers are not political. This teacher's comment can also reflect the ways numbers are often perceived as immutable (e.g., Henke et al., 2020; Koetsenruijter & Willem, 2011; McConway, 2015). But in each of these four posts (Item 4, Item, 18, Item 39, and Item 32), the data is included to present a particular narrative or claim. Notably, the two posts that this group said they were most likely to use in the classroom (Item 4 and Item 18) both used *The Washington Post's* Fatal Force database (Tate et al., 2021) to generate their post. The Fatal Force database has tracked and recorded every fatal police interaction since January 1, 2015—allowing viewers to search the database based on a variety of criteria, including the location, the gender and race of the victim, the year, and if the victim was armed. In other words, these posts are agenda-driven, relying on and manipulating the same data to make a particular claim. Therefore these posts can function

similarly to the posts these teachers considered to be too opinion-based or designed to appeal to a reader's emotions. Attending to how the same data can be manipulated and wielded in strategic ways could be a worthwhile exploration, but that is not what these teachers described. While some of the other groups of teachers noted they would want to fact-check the data themselves before showing students, these teachers anticipated fact-checking the posts *as* the lesson. What is left unclear is how these teachers would navigate students discovering these partisan and political uses of the data. Or rather, what would these teachers do if students determined that the PragerU post presented the data in misleading ways? Or perhaps, these kinds of determinations are the underlying goal of these teachers, allowing students to arrive at their preferred conclusions without having to make a stand as a teacher explicitly.

The Critical Confronter

The Critical Confronter discussed including social media posts in very similar ways to the Context Provider and the Data Debater. The Critical Confronter described a desire to provide students with different perspectives to help solidify and clarify various positions around the Black Lives Matter movement. These teachers also described wanting to avoid overly emotional or inflammatory posts. In fact, the Critical Confronter sorted the identical four posts as the Data Debater (Item 5, Item 10, Item 34, and Item 21) as those they would least likely use in the classroom. However, what made this group distinct was what I consider a more explicitly critical orientation to these discussions.

When discussing which posts these teachers would use, they discussed approaching their teaching in ways that would center the need for and value of protesting racial injustice. Specifically, whether or not people *should* be protesting was not up for

debate. As one participant said, "We know that Black people and Black men are disproportionately imprisoned. We know that Black people are disproportionately killed by police. I'm not gonna throw it out there and be like, 'what do you think? Do you think this is an issue at all?' Like it's an issue. It's happening" (T3=0.67*). Instead, the focus of these teachers would be to consider the discourse around *how* people protest. While the other subject positions left space (intentionally or not) for students to decide the protests are unjustified, the Critical Confronter imagined framing their use of these posts around violent and nonviolent protests, the rhetoric of rioting, and the priorities of protesters. For example, one of the posts (Item 42) the Critical Confronter was most likely to use in the classroom shows a side-by-side Instagram post. The post compares an unmasked, white woman protesting COVID-19 restrictions to a masked, Black woman protesting the extrajudicial killings of Black men. The majority of the participants aligned with this group noted this post would invite discussions of white privilege. For instance, one teacher said, "this image perfectly encapsulated white privileged and be important for students to see" (T3=0.55). Another teacher said, "My hope would be that these images side by side would lead to a conversation about privilege and how far we've come (or haven't) in the fight for basic human rights" (T3=0.64). This explicit mention of white privilege was significantly distinct from how the other groups of teachers discussed how they wanted to frame discussions. I interpret this kind of pedagogical imagining to be inherently more critical than the other subject positions available to teachers—aiming to expose problematic and systemic structures, rather than inviting students to inquire and arrive at any number of conclusions—some of which lack evidence or factual grounding.

Another unique post this group said they would likely use in the classroom was the tweet from then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. In the tweet, Pompeo critiques the *1619 Project* for presenting a "dark vision of America's birth" (Item 38). Some of these teachers noted this was a worthwhile post because "it is just such a good example of how some people think during this movement, and by such an important person in our government" (T3=0.51*). For others, this post was important because it allowed students to "be aware that the content they're consuming is not free from political influence" (T3=0.67*). The teacher later described how they would want students to understand the ways narratives in social studies curriculum are often debated and maintained, but that they, as their teacher, were committed to responsibly presenting history and government content—namely recognizing the impacts of slavery on modern society. In this way, showing this post was not about debating its merits or inviting students to agree or disagree with the message, but rather to recognize the ways many try to prevent critical explorations of society, denying past wrongdoings or ongoing injustices.

Notably, the teachers who significantly loaded on as Critical Confronters were predominately women, preservice teachers. This finding suggests that some teachers may be more willing to imagine more critical, justice-oriented approaches to their teaching—recognizing the urgency and need for such practices. For example, some of the women participants may have been more open to this viewpoint being able to recognize the ways other systems of oppression—namely patriarchy and misogyny—have operated in their own lives. This familiarity with oppressive systems could position them to be apt to take up critical approaches in their classroom. This interpretation may be supported by the

finding that men were statistically unlikely to take up the role of the Critical Confronter[14]. Additionally, because there were no teachers with more than two years of teaching experience in this group and that teachers with more than ten years of experience were statistically unlikely to be a Critical Confronter, it is possible that as teachers get more experience in the classroom they are less inclined to adopt critical or potentially controversial approaches. It could also be that age or generational differences in teachers are worth further exploration. Future research should examine any possible relationships between a teacher's criticality and their gender or their amount of teaching experience.

Conclusion

As I have suggested in this chapter, to take up the position of teacher is to be significantly constrained by the normalized discourses of teaching. While there were many distinct ways of reacting to these social media posts, these teacher's descriptions of how they would use social media posts in the classroom coalesced around a set of shared perspectives. That the idealized position of Guide on the Side seemingly displaced, crowded out, and supplanted other subject positions of these teacher is notable. In particular, these teachers described acting as a Guide on the Side, where they would present a variety of perspectives and have students analyze and discuss them. These kinds of descriptions of teaching often relied on suppressing their own political views and presenting "both sides" of the Black Lives Matter movement to present a fair and balanced view. However, the teachers—both explicitly and implicitly—described goals

[14] I want to reiterate that I conducted a series of correlations. I examined relationships between the factors generated in this round of sorting and the factors generated with the teachers sorted the posts based on their reaction, between various demographic identifiers, and with the CivID scale. While there were a few statistically significant correlations, which I discuss in Appendix G, generally there were no meaningful correlations. As I discuss in the appendix, I believe the lack of significant correlations is partly due to the ways participants may draw on different discourses for the different tasks.

for their lesson that were not well suited to both sides-ism. Specifically, many of these teachers did not seem to envision students concluding that racial injustice was not an issue. Therefore, these discourses, which function to constrain what is imaginable in the role of "teacher", have significant consequences for the kind of teaching and learning fostered in the classroom.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I believe media literacy is important. I think it can help slow the ways we consume information. And, in the wake of the insurrection of the U.S. Capitol and in the midst of my doom scrolling, I came across so many tweets calling for media literacy. They were saying if people can learn to interrogate the media they consume, they will be less susceptible to disinformation campaigns. As I finished data collection and was pouring over my data and having final conversations with participants, seeing references to media literacy piqued my interest. It's kind of like when you get a new car and then suddenly see the same model everywhere on the road. Everyone else seemingly drives the same car as you—"Hey!—beep, beep—I like talking about media literacy too!".

But as I read through various posts, I started noticing—to extend the car metaphor—those other folks were driving around with upgraded trim packages while I was rocking the basic model. I started seeing people were talking about the shortcomings of media literacy. I saw one thread about how media literacy and critical thinking demand deep attention. These skills often ask users to look deeply and skeptically at a post or a claim and to question everything—which is usually how mis- and disinformation campaigns thrive. Sure, I had thought about these things and the shortcomings of various approaches, but I'm not sure I had been thinking about <u>why</u> beyond them not always being effective strategies.

So, what happens when we recognize that people respond to information in ways that reflect epistemological and ontological commitments? Well, that requires a move beyond sourcing and credibility and C.R.A.A.P tests[15] to interrogate the systems, structures, and discourses that make certain ways of viewing and engaging the world especially available or appealing.

During an interview, I asked one of the participants to describe what changed when they shifted from thinking about their personal reactions to thinking about which social media posts they would use in the classroom. The participant said, "I started to value things like truth." At the time, the comment didn't stand out to me. I didn't ask any follow-up questions, nor did I find the sentiment all that strange. But, it has stuck with me as I wrote this dissertation. Why did this teacher only start thinking about truth when they imagined showing the posts to students? Is it promising that truth became a criterion—even if it was later than perhaps would have been ideal? Well, technically, they said "things <u>like</u> truth," so was truth even the criterion?

I have grappled with what it means if teachers are less tethered to the truth when they scroll through their feed—consuming countless posts that make countless claims. This participant's short answer offers remarkable insight into the relationship between a teacher's reactions and a teacher's described teaching practices. But is it a satisfactory answer? Does my analysis suggest that the relationship between reacting and teaching is about an attention to something like truth?

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[15] The C.R.A.A.P test, and many similar acronym-based credibility assessments used in K-12 classrooms, often rely on a checklist of items that ask students to look deeply at various aspects of the source. Many of these tests have been critiqued as inefficient and ineffective protocols (e.g. McGrew et al., 2017).

I designed this dissertation study with two questions in mind: How do social studies teachers react to the political and civic sphere as presented on social media? Do social studies teachers perceive and respond to political content on social media in ways that shape what they envision doing in their classrooms? I have returned to these questions over and over again, with experiences of clarity intersecting with profound muddiness as I work to offer answers. As I shared in the vignette introducing this chapter, I have been consistently thinking about notions of truth in relation to these questions. Many scholars have pointed to media literacy as an urgent need to respond to the current landscape. And while these offerings have significantly moved beyond checklist protocols, there remains an absence of attention to ways political subjectivity functions in how teachers consume media, how they make sense of what is true, and how those processes shape their teaching. As I summarize my findings and highlight a few key implications for the field, I return to how a teacher's conception of truth rubs up against what the current social studies education literature offers classroom teachers working to navigate the rapidly evolving media landscape.

Summary of Findings and Significance

One of the ongoing challenges in social studies education is the many disparate, often dissonant forces that come together to teach students about the political and social world. It is vital to continue to interrogate the ways a teacher's sense-making of the world enters the classroom. In this study, 29 social studies teachers and preservice teachers sorted a collection of 42 social media posts centering on the Black Lives Matter movement. I asked them to sort the posts initially based on their own reaction and then again imagining which posts they would use in their classroom to try and untangle the

messy relationships between a teacher's reactions and their teaching. Through this dissertation, I have elaborated on the ways the participating teachers reacted to social media content and the ways those reactions surfaced and were at times suppressed when describing how they would teach with the posts. Additionally, I have attended to the various discourses that shape and guide the teacher toward particular ways of being and thinking. This attention allowed me to consider how we could imagine the role of social studies teacher otherwise. I have attempted to highlight how a teacher's situatedness in the political landscape—as captured through social media engagement—informs how they imagine engaging students with social media content around Black Lives Matter. Further, this study allowed me to advance my ongoing and emerging vision for a poststructural Q, employing by-person factor analysis while taking Foucault's framing of the subject seriously.

In Chapter 4, I emphasized the ways social media posts are inevitably limited in what they communicate. Due to the short-form structure of social media and the many structural features that afford and constrain particular kinds of engagement, a post online can only present so much information. As I indicated in my analysis, this requires posters to strategically use various structural features of social media to communicate meaning and perspective more readily. Further, the language embedded in the posts can function to significantly shape how users interpret and engage with the message. Most notably, many of the posts in this study relied on discourses of binary opposition. By depending on "us versus them" framing, these posts positioned users to react in increasingly partisan and polarized ways.

Additionally, these binary oppositions drain the complexity and nuance of the issues to present two mutually exclusive and reductive perspectives. These binary oppositions are significant because people increasingly consume their news through social media (Bode, 2016) and are increasingly inundated with these polarized positions. As I suggested in my analysis, when users—teachers included—are exposed to polarized and reductive content on their social media feeds, it likely frames their understandings of political and social issues through an us versus them lens. They are thus invited to consume the message as either in alignment or in opposition to the views and values they've adopted.

My analysis in Chapter 5 confirmed the notion that teachers were interpreting the posts in ways informed by their political subjectivity. For each of the presented subject positions—the Curious Consolidator, the Dismissive Scroller, and the Angered Constituent—political views and partisan politics functioned in slightly different ways. The Curious Consolidator described being open and receptive to dissonant views, but in practice, they reacted to posts that bolstered and clarified their views while characterizing opposing views as less substantive and less credible. This finding reflects literature in the field of political communication that suggests people feel they *ought* to have diverse perspectives present on their feeds but tend to still focus on content with which they align (e.g., Dylko, 2016; Garrett & Resnick, 2011). The Dismissive Scroller was more willing to center their political and partisan commitments but tended to dismiss content that became overly familiar or overly simplistic. In this way, these teachers were more passive consumers of information—waiting to be shocked into engagement. However, their political subjectivities still shaped their reactions. In particular, for these teachers,

their political subjectivity determined what they dismissed as illogical and what they dismissed for being overly familiar. Finally, the Angered Constituent focused on reacting to political figures with whom they disagreed. Their frustration was often tied to the recognition that these figures had large followings who may take what is posted at face value. However, they repeatedly demonstrated that they unwittingly took posts from politicians with whom they agreed at face value. These findings suggest that a teacher's political subjectivity functions in a variety of ways when reacting to content online. While there are many ways it manifests, their reactions were consistently informed by their political subjectivity.

Chapter 6 then examined how teachers described teaching with the collection of posts. Because the subject positions that emerged were significantly correlated, I interrogated what discourses functioned across the groups by presenting the Guide on the Side. My findings suggest this position as Guide on the Side may have supplanted and overrode other subject positions for these teachers. The widely shared views and orientations to the posts described by these teachers reveal the ways teachers are significantly constrained by dominant discourses about how social studies teachers should approach teaching about political and social issues. In particular, they consistently described taking up liberal discourses that value students engaging with various perspectives and arriving at their own well-informed conclusions. Further, these discursive values were often described as a path toward neutrality or objectivity in the classroom, presenting "both sides" and suppressing their own reactions—which were notably informed by political subjectivity—to give information in unbiased ways. It makes sense that many teachers would see the affordances of presenting both sides when

teaching about current events in the social studies classroom. Offering "both sides" reflects larger commitments to inquiry and historical thinking common in social studies. These approaches often value examining multiple perspectives, including historically marginalized voices, and constructing an argument with evidence. These teachers could perceive both sides-ism as a logical extension of these social studies practices. As such, I am not saying that teaching both sides is inherently a problem that should always be avoided. However, when teachers take up both sides-ism as an unquestioned good, they risk introducing oversimplified dichotomies of complex social issues.

Further, without sufficient critical examination and intentional planning, both sides-ism can present false equivalencies, further entrench students in polarized logics, and can legitimize harmful and dehumanizing rhetoric in the classroom. In many ways, the changing political, cultural, social, and economic landscape shines a bright light on the weaknesses of "both sides" teaching. Centering complexity offers a new range of untapped affordances when supporting students as they make sense of this current moment.

What is significant, however, is that these teachers seemed to assume this pedagogical approach would lead toward desirable ends—that students who were critical to the Black Lives Matter movement would have their views challenged, and their investigation into both sides would lead to more justice-oriented perspectives. My analysis indicated that many of these teachers often alluded to an assumption that if they show students the "right" information, they will arrive at desirable conclusions—notably conclusions that align with their own views. For teachers working to navigate the complex political ecology and cope with the partisan divisions of our culture, it may be

comforting to engage the notion that exposing students to "correct" information will turn them away from problematic views. However, research has shown that being exposed to evidence does not actually change people's perspectives (e.g., Kahne & Bowyer, 2017; Taber & Lodge, 2016). In fact, people often seem to double down on their existing conceptions (e.g., Kunda, 1990; Garrett, 2009). The commitment to presenting information and assuming it will impact students' perspectives—despite evidence to the contrary—warrants further attention. By assuming students would bend toward justice after examining both sides, these teachers failed to recognize that this pedagogical approach still made room for students to maintain problematic or harmful views if they felt justified by the presented, unsubstantiated claims.

There was one notable expectation—the Critical Confronters—who bound their "both sides" approach in ways that eliminated a denial of racial injustice. While these teachers also maintained a reliance on "both sides-ism," they seemed to find ways to leverage the approach in ways that stayed true to their aims.

These findings begin to untangle some of the messy webs of meaning-making, suggesting relationships between a teacher's political subjectivity, reactions, and teaching. By looking at social media specifically, my findings build on emerging conversations around the relationship between a teacher's ideology and their news source selection (Clark, Schmeichel, & Garrett, 2021), their approach to teaching about contentious issues (Geller, 2020), and the ways affective responses circulate with classroom discussion (Garrett et al., 2020). My study maps onto this work to reveal how teachers' efforts to work against their political subjectivity which informed their personal reactions to content, unintentionally ensure their political subjectivity circulates in their

pedagogical decisions. In short, the impulse to pursue "neutrality" by suppressing their own reactions risks their politics shaping their teaching in less intentional ways—specifically in ways that may run counter to their political commitments. Teachers must more thoughtfully and intentionally consider when and how their political subjectivities and commitments shape their decisions when presenting information on political and social issues. Further, teachers must be invited to consider the messages relayed to students when they make space for harmful or dehumanizing perspectives in the classroom.

So, what is the alternative to these pursuits of objectivity through both sides? If a teacher's political subjectivity informs their decision-making—largely unknowingly—what must be done instead? I have argued thus far that being aware of the ways politics and partisanship are operating is important. I remain committed to that stance. An increased awareness to how political subjectivity operates exposes the ways "neutrality" fails and thus frees teachers up to readily examine when certain approaches are not well suited for the social studies classroom. As my analysis suggests, political subjectivity was informing the social media posts the teachers said they would use in the classroom. However, because their political subjectivity was not intentionally engaged, it often made space for end goals these teachers did not desire. While I am not advocating for outright political indoctrination, I believe there are more thoughtful ways to engage with political and social issues. Based on the descriptions my participants offered, by avoiding indoctrinating practices, these teachers were overcorrecting and denying the ways their political and partisan commitments were already at work. In place of universally shared political commitments, I echo Geller's (2020) assertion that teachers must attend to the

marginalized students in their classroom when thinking about how and why to structure particular learning experiences. This suggestion is inherently political, but in a way that transcends simplistic political party affiliation. Centering marginalized students invites teachers to move beyond a Left/Right divide and instead focus their attention to power and ethical teaching stances that ideally aren't a Red/Blue issue. This attention to ethical stances focuses on whose truths, knowledge, and safety are being considered, which is of particular importance when centering issues of persistent oppression and injustice in the classroom.

Future Directions for Persistent Questions

While these findings provide additional context and complexity for understanding the intersections of a teacher's social media consumption, their political subjectivity, and their approach to teaching, my study offers a new series of questions that require further attention.

My analysis in Chapter 5 suggested these teachers conceptualized agency in differing ways. For instance, the Curious Consolidator positioned themselves as agentic when they imagined using specific posts to change the opinions of others. The Dismissive Scroller dismissed posts that were performative or overly simplistic, describing a desire for posts that could lead to collective action that targets dismantling systems. In this way, they recognized agency as constrained by the systems and structures of society. Finally, the Angered Constituent viewed politicians as significant agents for change, capable of changing the general public's views and advancing legislative change. Future research should more fully attend to how teachers conceptualize agency in relation to social media activism. Such work could offer keen insight into how teachers conceptualize the

political capacity of social media, what messages they relay to their students about social media and political engagement, and how they employ their own political agency online. Many of the teachers in my study mentioned they do not post content they consider to be political on their own accounts. I remain curious about what this means and what aspects of social media impact the ways they perceive, engage with, and share (or not) political posts. Future research on social studies teachers' perceptions of the relationship between being a teacher and their personal social media experiences would contribute significantly to our understanding of how social studies teachers are thinking about social media in their personal and professional lives.

Additionally, because social media activism can often fail to enact substantive change, it is crucial to interrogate the ways teachers conceptualize their activism. For example, future work should examine how teachers come to recognize the ways they have political agency—whether they want it or not—in the classroom. My findings suggest these teachers were not always aware of the ways they had a significant capacity for change in their teaching. This kind of query into teachers' views could offer considerable insight into how teachers make sense of online activism and digital civic engagement.

Further, recognizing how the teaching force remains primarily comprised of white women, more fully examining the gendered and racialized dynamics of social media consumption and engagement remains urgent. My study was limited by who agreed to participate, and thus gender and race were not significant factors in my analysis. Future work should specifically examine the ways teachers with differing subject positions engage online, how they are differently or similarly oriented to the narratives and

discourses online, and how their subjectivities constrain the ways they feel they can react. Because many of these teachers described using their own reactions as a barometer for how students might respond, this attention to race and gender is increasingly urgent. The teaching force remains predominantly white women, so this introduces new considerations and challenges for whose reactions are accommodated in the classroom. For instance, if white teachers are less affected by graphic images of violence or trauma, they may be more inclined to include it in the classroom without further consideration.

The participants in this study consistently noted that making decisions as a teacher about what posts were good to use in the classroom was more obvious than when reacting to the posts on their own. I am curious to further interrogate this perception that somehow their role as teachers clarified decisions that were muddier and messier in their lives outside the classroom. While I interpret this perception as being connected to discourses that constrain what it means to be a teacher, there are numerous other factors that should be identified. For instance, what aspects made their reaction-based sorting more difficult? Perhaps the binary oppositions failed to accommodate their own complex thinking but felt conducive for presenting the topic to students. While the data I collected in this study didn't allow me to investigate these distinctions further, the implications could be significant.

Additionally, my analysis suggests that the Guide on the Side approach to teacher was so uniformly and widely elicited in the participants' responses. Future research could more explicitly examine the inter-relationship between the Guide of the Side with the three teaching sub-factors (the Context Provider, Data Debater, and Critical Confronter) as well as with the three reaction-based factors (Curious Consolidator, Dismissive

Scroller, and Angered Constituent). My findings allude to the ways the discourses of Guide on the Side teaching may be so hegemonic that it eliminates room for any alternative ways of taking up the position of social studies teacher. Additional research is needed to further examine how racialized, gendered, and political subject positions intersect with the Guide on the Side. It is vital to interrogate the possible implications of the Guide on the Side discourses crowding out all other subject positions teachers perform.

Finally, my study offers insight into the discourses at work in how these teachers described teaching with social media. As my analysis indicated, these discourses functioned to limit the available positions for teachers—denying real opportunities to take up more radical or critical approaches or to engage with political and social issues in complex or nuanced ways. Discourse limited their descriptions to parroting—knowingly or not—many of the dominant tropes in social studies. However, it is important to note that these descriptions do not reveal what actually happens in the classroom or how students experience lessons that incorporate social media. While discourse may constrain how these teachers *talked* about their work in the classroom, they may actually take up different practices in the classroom. As such, more work is needed to see how these reactions and described lessons function in actuality, identifying similarities and differences in the ways teachers describe their aims and practices and the ways they enact their lessons.

Implications for Social Studies (Teacher) Education

Again, I return to the role of truth that was prevalent in the ways teachers described their inclusion of social media content in the classroom. These teachers'

tendency to conflate notions of credibility, sourcing, and the presentation of both sides as a pursuit of "truth" has significant implications for the field of social studies. This potential conflation demands that teachers and teacher educators alike recognize the often multiple, competing truths that operate in a classroom space. An individual's understanding of truth is always partial and contingent but acknowledging that does not erase the need for shared truths or deny the possibility that truth exists. As such, teachers' orientation to lead their students to find the truth is not inherently problematic. But the issue of truth is far messier and complex for social studies teachers than is often recognized. For instance, when designing and enacting lessons, teachers need to consider whose truth is being privileged, whose truth is being critiqued, and how their own truths are operating in each decision they make. This more nuanced approach to pursuing "truth" in the classroom invites a more critical examination of the ways our epistemological commitments inform our reading of the world.

Further, teacher educators can support preservice and novice teachers in more nuanced and complex investigations of relying on "both sides" approaches to teaching. Some issues are well suited for presenting both sides, but many are not. Inviting teacher candidates to engage in this work is vital—particularly when the possible consequences of circulating and endorsing harmful views are so significant.

Foucault's conceptualization of discourse offers one way to engage how people come to accept things as true. But there are certainly ways of supporting both preservice teachers in teacher education settings and students in K-12 classrooms come to make sense of the ways epistemology functions to shape and guide how we react to political information. This is a significant and urgent need that must preface media literacy and

digital literacy skills. A teacher's assessment of credibility or their attention to sourcing will always be limited by the ways their political subjectivity shaped and informs how they come to know certain things to be true about the world.

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APPENDIX A

KNOWLES'S CIVID SCALE (ABRIDGED)

How strongly do you agree or disagree that good citizenship education primarily teaches...	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
the importance of honoring the history and heritage of the United States Con					
the importance of coming up with your own personal opinion before voting Lib					
the nature of class privilege across generations Crit					
skills such as cooperation and deliberation with others Lib					
that a strong foreign policy should protect the United States' position as a global power Con					
political tolerance and open-mindedness Lib					
about practices of racism, sexism, and class exploitation in everyday life Crit					
root causes of inequality in society Crit					
that the free market can solve most social problems Con					
students how to think, instead of what to think Lib					
about the experiences and goals of marginalized people in society					
the importance of participating in a diverse society Lib					
government assistance discourages people from improving their lives Con					
that the United States is exceptional Con					
the presence of institutional racism in modern society Crit					

Con – Indicates a "conservative" statement
Lib – Indicates a "liberal" statement
Crit – Indicates a "critical" statement

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

How did you find yourself engaging with these posts? What stood out to you about the process?

Looking at some the posts that your ranked high (+2, +3, +4), talk me through why these posts were placed in these columns.

What about the ones you ranked low (-2, -3, -4)?

Can you talk to me about you made decisions about the posts you sorted in the middle of the grid?

Why do you think these were the things (referencing explanations/justifications they used for sorting) that informed your sorting of these posts?

Were there any posts that you were unsure how to sort? What did you do with those posts?

You mentioned _____ in your written responses. Can you tell me more about that?

- Ask clarifying questions about specific aspects of their written responses
- Point out specific posts and have them describe what informed why they placed it where they did
- Identify any contradictions/exceptions/dissonances in their sort based on provided answers and invite to clarify

Turn to teaching and invite them to share about if/how their thinking changed, how they imaged students engaging with these posts, and why some posts were unlikely to be used in the classroom.

APPENDIX C

CRIB SHEETS[16]

R1: The Curious Consolidator

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
4	NastyFeminism - Disproportionate Shootings	4	0	0
41	Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	4	-3	1
	Ranked Higher than in Other Factor Arrays			
31	Chnge - BLM graphic	3	-4	-1
33	NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	2	0	0
29	Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	2	-2	1
23	The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest	2	-1	-1
1	Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police	2	1	1
36	AOC - Impunity for Police	1	0	-2
39	Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	1	0	-1
17	Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	1	-1	0
27	Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	1	-1	-4
16	Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	1	0	0
22	Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	0	-1	-2
11	Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	0	-2	-1
25	Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	0	-4	-2
	Ranked Lower than in Other Factor Arrays			
28	Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	0	3	2
5	Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	0	2	4
3	Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	0	1	1
7	Ted Nugent - Meritocracy	0	1	2
8	Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	-1	2	3
14	Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	-1	1	0
18	Prager U - Police go where Crime Is	-1	0	0
19	Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	-1	1	1
34	TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	-2	4	0
37	Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	-2	3	1
10	Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	-3	0	0
	Lowest Ranked Statements			
12	Breitbart - Kneel for God	-4	0	-1

[16] The crib sheets display the relative rankings of the social media posts for each factor. Each post is color coded to represent the interpreted ideological orientation of the post. Red indicates Right-leaning posts and Blue indicates Left-leaning posts.

R2: The Dismissive Scroller

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 3
34	TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	4	-2	0
38	Pompeo - 1619 Project	4	3	2
	Positive Statements Ranked Higher than in Other Factor Arrays			
37	Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	3	-2	1
28	Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	3	0	2
30	ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	2	-3	-3
35	Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	2	0	-1
14	Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	1	-1	0
24	Larry Elder - Affluent security	1	-2	-3
15	Ted Cruz - Police injured	1	-1	-1
2	Dan Crenshaw - Riots	1	-1	-1
32	Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	0	-1	-2
12	Breitbart - Kneel for God	0	-4	-1
	Negative Statements Ranked Lower than in Other Factor Arrays			
40	Ibram X Kendi - Police insep from Brutality	-1	0	0
6	Chnge - Racism in American	-1	1	1
17	Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	-1	1	0
20	The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems	-1	1	1
13	The_Female_Lead - Violence	-2	1	2
11	Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	-2	0	-1
29	Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	-2	2	1
41	Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	-3	4	1
	Lowest Ranked Statements			
25	Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	-4	0	-2
31	Chnge - BLM graphic	-4	3	-1

R3: The Angered Constituent

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 3	Factor 1	Factor 2
26	Donald Trump - Law & Order	4	-2	-2
5	Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	4	0	2
	Positive Statements Ranked Higher than in Other Factor Arrays			
8	Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Org	3	-1	2
42	Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	3	0	0
7	Ted Nugent - Meritocracy	2	0	1
13	The_Female_Lead - Violence	2	1	-2
9	Feminist - Side of the Oppressor	0	-1	-1
	Negative Statements Ranked Lower than in Other Factor Arrays			
35	Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	-1	0	2
39	Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	-1	1	0
22	Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	-2	0	-1
32	Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	-2	-1	0
36	AOC - Impunity for Police	-2	1	0
24	Larry Elder - Affluent security	-3	-2	1
	Lowest Ranked Statements			
27	Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	-4	1	-1

T1: The Context Provider

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
4	NastyFeminism - Disproportionate Shootings	4	4	4
9	Feminist - Side of the Oppressor	4	1	3
	Positive Statements Ranked Higher than in Other Factor Arrays			
31	Chnge - BLM graphic	3	1	1
27	Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	3	2	2
11	Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	2	1	1
25	Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	2	-1	0
16	Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	1	-1	0
13	The_Female_Lead - Violence	1	0	0
33	NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	1	0	-1
29	Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	0	-1	-1
41	Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	0	-4	-3
	Negative Statements Ranked than in Other Factor Arrays			
42	Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	0	1	4
32	Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	-1	3	0
28	Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	-2	1	1
8	Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	-2	-1	-1
5	Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	-2	1	-1
34	TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	-3	0	1
	Lowest Ranked Statements			
7	Ted Nugent - Meritocracy	-4	0	-1
10	Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	-4	-3	-2

T2: The Data Debater

	Highest Ranked Statements	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 3
4	NastyFeminism - Disproportionate Shootings	4	4	4
18	Prager U - Police go where Crime Is	4	0	0
	Positive Statements Ranked Higher than in Other Factor Arrays			
39	Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	3	2	1
32	Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	3	-1	0
22	Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	2	1	-1
2	Dan Crenshaw - Riots	1	0	-2
5	Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	1	-2	-1
7	Ted Nugent - Meritocracy	0	-4	-1
14	Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	0	-1	-1
	Negative Statements Ranked Lower than in Other Factor Arrays			
1	Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police	0	1	1
6	Chnge - Racism in American	0	1	1
16	Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	-1	1	0
25	Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	-1	2	0
40	Ibram X Kendi - Police inseparable from Brutality	-1	0	0
17	Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	-2	0	0

26	Donald Trump - Law & Order	-2	-1	2
3	Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	-2	-1	0
37	Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	-2	-1	0
Lowest Ranked Statements				
41	Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	-4	0	-3
30	ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	-4	-1	-3

T3: The Critical Confronter

Highest Ranked Statements		Factor 3	Factor 1	Factor 2
42	Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	4	0	1
4	NastyFeminism - Disproportionate Shootings	4	4	4
Positive Statements Ranked Higher than in Other Factor Arrays				
38	Pompeo - 1619 Project	3	0	0
26	Donald Trump - Law & Order	2	-1	-2
34	TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	1	-3	0
36	AOC - Impunity for Police	1	0	0
37	Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	0	-1	-2
3	Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	0	-1	-2
Negative Statements Ranked Lower than in Other Factor Arrays				
24	Larry Elder - Affluent security	0	1	1
22	Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	-1	1	2
33	NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	-1	1	0
2	Dan Crenshaw - Riots	-2	0	1
35	Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	-2	0	0
15	Ted Cruz - Police injured	-2	-1	-1
Lowest Ranked Statements				
12	Breitbart - Kneel for God	-4	-3	-3
21	Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	-4	-2	-1

APPENDIX D

Q-SET: COLLECTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Item #	Link	Subtopic	Partisan	Platform	Account	Followers	Engagements
1	https://twitter.com/BreeNewsome/status/1319370729104805895	Police	Left	Twitter	Bree Newsome Bass	386.2K Followers	139 Replies; 5.3K Retweets; 17.4K Likes
2	https://www.instagram.com/p/CA6NgfqpgNY/	Protest	Right	Instagram	Dan Crenshaw	2.1 million Followers	76.6K Likes; 1,583 Comments
3	https://twitter.com/GregAbbott_TX/status/1296287262741798912	Police	Left	Twitter	Greg Abbott	478.1K Followers	1.6K Replies; 8.5K Retweets; 26K Likes
4	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBmqsV9nXbG/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	@nasty feminism	490K Followers	38.5K Likes; 945 Comments
5	https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10166058258485354	BLM/ Racism	Right	Facebook	Breitbart	5 million Followers	14K Reactions; 1.2K Comments; 5.1K Shares
6	https://www.instagram.com/p/CGdtUyHA1qA/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	@chnge	2 million Followers	101.7K Likes; 792 Comments
7	https://www.facebook.com/tednugent/posts/10157570675977297	BLM/ Racism	Right	Facebook	Ted Nugent	3.7 million Followers	65K Reactions; 1.8K Comments; 46K Shares
8	https://twitter.com/RealCandaceO/status/1308943761456664577	BLM/ Racism	Right	Twitter	Candace Owens	2.7 million Followers	2.9K Replies; 37.3K Retweets; 103.9K Likes
9	https://www.instagram.com/p/CA9WBZ8M7qD/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	@feminist	6.5 million Followers	184K Likes; 498 Comments
10	https://www.instagram.com/p/CDJpy-cFLLt/	Protest	Right	Instagram	@students4trump	741K Followers	17.8K Likes; 257 Comments

Item #	Link	Subtopic	Partisan	Platform	Account	Followers	Engagements
11	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBWQOzjDNc2/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	Taylor Swift	140 million Followers	1 million Likes
12	https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10165457598995354	Protest	Right	Facebook	Breitbart	5 million Followers	76K Reactions; 3.9K Comments; 10K Shares
13	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBYkrI0HWbA/	Protest	Left	Instagram	@the_female_lead	1.2 million Followers	53.8K Likes; 552 Comments
14	https://twitter.com/RealCandaceO/status/1270744579453726722	Protest	Right	Twitter	Candace Owens	2.7 million Followers	3.3K Replies; 47.4K Retweets; 129.1K Likes
15	https://twitter.com/tedcruz/status/1283777645130342402	Police	Right	Twitter	Ted Cruz	4 million Followers	778 Replies; 3.9K Retweets; 15K Likes
16	https://twitter.com/WalshFreedom/status/1270892608928264192	BLM/ Racism	Right	Twitter	Joe Walsh	257.8K Followers	412 Replies; 2.7K Retweets; 19.9K Likes
17	https://www.facebook.com/TheOther98/posts/5063719906972280	Protest	Left	Facebook	The Other 98%	6.6 million Followers	78K Reactions; 11K Comments; 97K Shares
18	https://www.instagram.com/p/CEyzumZAWvU/	Police	Right	Instagram	Prager U	1.3 million Followers	55.6K Likes; 1,587 Comments
19	https://twitter.com/Kaepernick7/status/1308908426349678592	Police	Left	Twitter	Colin Kaepernick	2.4 million Followers	6.5K Replies; 26.6K Retweets; 90.2K Likes
20	https://www.instagram.com/p/CCBpEPxH_Va/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	@the_female_lead	1.2 million Followers	165.9K Likes; 1,642 Comments

Item #	Link	Subtopic	Partisan	Platform	Account	Followers	Engagements
21	https://www.facebook.com/RushLimbaugh/posts/3875841569098142	BLM/ Racism	Right	Facebook	Rush Limbaugh	2.3 million Followers	17K Reactions; 5.1K Comments; 2.4K Shares
22	https://www.facebook.com/OccupyDemocrats/posts/4236408146452207	Protest	Right	Facebook	Occupy Democrats	10.1 million Followers	28K Reactions; 1.9K Comments; 8.1K Shares
23	https://twitter.com/TheDailyShow/status/1267257845164183552	Protest	Left	Twitter	The Daily Show	9.1 million Followers	284 Replies; 6.1K Retweets; 19.7K Likes
24	https://twitter.com/larryelder/status/1268956518688284674	Police	Right	Twitter	Larry Elder	923.5K Followers	589 Replies; 5.3K Retweets; 13.8K Likes
25	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBUPN75Brf7/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	@courtneyahndesign	225K Followers	111K Likes; 380 Comments
26	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBLluOwBzUT/	Police	Right	Instagram	Donald Trump	23.3 million Followers	672.8K Likes; 28.2K Comments
27	https://www.instagram.com/p/CD9zbzAg_Lv/	Protest	Left	Instagram	Campaign Zero	413K Followers	29.5K Likes; 159 Comments
28	https://www.instagram.com/p/CFz46h8FE9H/	BLM/ Racism	Right	Instagram	Young Americans Foundation	252K Followers	14.6K Likes; 535 Comments
29	https://www.facebook.com/OccupyDemocrats/posts/3880012455425113	Protest	Left	Facebook	Occupy Democrats	10.1 million Followers	202K Reactions; 10K Comments; 139K Shares
30	https://www.facebook.com/ForAmerica/posts/3578485742209758	Police	Right	Facebook	For America	7.1 million Followers	62K Reactions; 1.2K Comments; 55K Shares

Item #	Link	Subtopic	Partisan	Platform	Account	Followers	Engagements
31	https://www.instagram.com/p/CFrdqgrggNQ/	BLM/ Racism	Left	Instagram	@chnge	2 million Followers	185.9K Likes; 2,866 Likes
32	https://www.instagram.com/p/CEdIt5blZre/	Police	Right	Instagram	Prager U	1.3 million Followers	66.9K Likes; 1,781 Comments
33	https://www.instagram.com/p/CEqFIHEJw3W/	Police	Left	Instagram	@nasty feminism	490K Followers	53.4K Likes; 1,425 Comments
34	https://www.instagram.com/p/CA3fSrBJfpq/	Protest	Right	Instagram	Turning Point USA	1.2 million Followers	31.7K Likes; 872 Comments
35	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBOqIh1p6Q2/	Police	Right	Instagram	Dan Crenshaw	2.1 million Followers	61.9K Likes; 1,230 Comments
36	https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1265416004483629061	Police	Left	Twitter	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	9.5 million Followers	2.2K Replies; 27.6K Retweets; 117.6K Likes
37	https://twitter.com/charliekirk11/status/1265839589639352320	Protest	Right	Twitter	Charlie Kirk	1.8 million Followers	7.1K Replies; 15.4K Retweets; 48.2K Likes
38	https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1283912748078956545	BLM/ Racism	Right	Twitter	Michael Pompeo	2.5 million Followers	11.3K Replies; 14.6K Retweets; 27.6K Likes
39	https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-_Bexg24Z/	Police	Left	Instagram	Campaign Zero	413K Followers	289K Likes; 4,660 Comments
40	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBarZtEHJSe/	Police	Left	Instagram	Ibram X. Kendi	950K Followers	36.7k Likes; 121 Comments

Item #	Link	Subtopic	Partisan	Platform	Account	Followers	Engagements
41	https://www.instagram.com/p/CAq3fpCgyve/	Protest	Left	Instagram	Lebron James	74.1 million Followers	5 million likes; 131k Comments
42	https://www.instagram.com/p/CBQR7Ays0nL/	Protest	Left	Instagram	@feminist	6.5 million Followers	846.2K Likes; 5.9KComments

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APPENDIX E

FACTOR ARRAYS FOR REACTION BASED SORTS

R1: The Curious Consolidator

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	✳ 30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	✳◀ 34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	✳✳◀ 8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	✳✳◀ 28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	✳✳▶ 36. AOC - Impunity for Police	✳✳▶ 33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	38. Pompeo - 1619 Project	✳✳▶ 4. NastyFeminism - spproportionate Shootings
✳✳◀ 12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	✳✳◀ 10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	24. Larry Elder - Affluent security	✳ 32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	✳✳▶ 22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	✳✳▶ 39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	✳✳▶ 31. Chnge - BLM graphic	✳✳▶ 41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side
		26. Donald Trump - Law & Order	2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots	✳ 42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	✳✳▶ 17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	✳✳▶ 23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest		
		✳✳◀ 37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor	✳✳◀ 5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	6. Chnge - Racism in American	1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police		
			✳✳◀ 14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems			
			15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality	✳✳▶ 27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes			
			18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is	35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	✳✳▶ 16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth			
			✳✳◀ 19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	✳◀ 7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy	13. The_Female_Lead - Violence			
				11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression				
				✳▶ 25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege				

Legend

✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.05

✳✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.01

► z-Score for the statement is higher than in all other factors

◄ z-Score for the statement is lower than in all other factors

R2: The Dismissive Scroller

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
✳✳◀ 25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	✳✳◀ 41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	✳✳▶ 14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	✳✳▶ 30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	✳✳▶ 37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	✳✳▶ 34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime
✳✳◀ 31. Chnge - BLM graphic	✳✳▶ 21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	✳✳◀ 13. The_Female_Lead - Violence	✳◀ 40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality	✳▶ 32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	✳▶ 3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	✳✳ 5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	38. Pompeo - 1619 Project
		✳✳◀ 29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest	33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	✳✳▶ 24. Larry Elder - Affluent security	✳✳▶ 35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples		
		26. Donald Trump - Law & Order	✳✳◀ 6. Chnge - Racism in American	39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	✳✳▶ 15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	✳ 8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization		
			9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor	16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police			
			✳✳◀ 17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	✳ 7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy			
			✳✳ 27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is	✳✳▶ 2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots			
			✳✳◀ 20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems	4. NastyFeminism - spproportionate Shootings	19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police			
				✳✳ 36. AOC - Impunity for Police				
				✳◀ 42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life				

Legend

✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.05

✳✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.01

► z-Score for the statement is higher than in all other factors

◄ z-Score for the statement is lower than in all other factors

R3: The Angered Constituent

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	24. Larry Elder - Affluent security	22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	** 14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	*► 8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	**► 26. Donald Trump - Law & Order
**◄ 27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	*◄ 30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	*◄ 32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots	** 17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	6. Chnge - Racism in American	38. Pompeo - 1619 Project	**► 42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	**► 5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist
		* 25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality	19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	*► 7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy		
		**◄ 36. AOC - Impunity for Police	** 31. Chnge - BLM graphic	10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems	13. The_Female_Lead - Violence		
			12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	** 37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots			
			11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	* 34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police			
			15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor	3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue			
			23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest	4. NastyFeminism - spproportionate Shootings	** 41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side			
				18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is				
				16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth				

Legend

* Distinguishing statement at P< 0.05

** Distinguishing statement at P< 0.01

► z-Score for the statement is higher than in all other factors

◄ z-Score for the statement is lower than in all other factors

APPENDIX F

FACTOR ARRAYS FOR TEACHING BASED SORTS

2nd Order Analysis: The Guide on the Side

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots	22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	38. Pompeo - 1619 Project	23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest	27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	4. NastyFeminism - spproportionate Shootings
12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor
		7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy	14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	13. The_Female_Lead - Violence	18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is	20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems		
		41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police	31. Chnge - BLM graphic		
			3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	26. Donald Trump - Law & Order	6. Chnge - Racism in American			
			37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions			
			35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	36. AOC - Impunity for Police			
			19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality	24. Larry Elder - Affluent security			
				34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime				
				17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal				

T1: The Context Provider

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
✳✳◄ 7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy	12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	✳✳◄ 28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	36. AOC - Impunity for Police	20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems	✳► 11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	✳✳► 31. Chnge - BLM graphic	4. NastyFeminism - sppropotionate Shootings
✳◄ 10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	✳✳◄ 34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	✳◄ 8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	✳✳► 16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest	27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor
		✳✳ 21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	✳✳ 2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots	6. Chnge - Racism in American	✳✳► 25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege		
		✳✳◄ 5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	26. Donald Trump - Law & Order	29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police	39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait		
			37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	✳✳► 41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	24. Larry Elder - Affluent security			
			✳✳► 30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	13. The_Female_Lead - Violence			
			✳✳◄ 32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	38. Pompeo - 1619 Project	✳ 22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism			
			14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is	33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners			
				17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal				
				40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality				

Legend

✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.05

✳✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.01

► z-Score for the statement is higher than in all other factors

◄ z-Score for the statement is lower than in all other factors

T2: The Data Debater

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	✳ 10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal	16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy	✳✳► 2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots	27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes	39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	✳► 4. NastyFeminism - spproportionate Shootings
30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	26. Donald Trump - Law & Order	25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	38. Pompeo - 1619 Project	11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression	20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems	✳✳► 32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	✳✳► 18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is
		✳✳◄ 3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	✳✳► 21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	31. Chnge - BLM graphic	23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest		
		37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	13. The_Female_Lead - Violence	42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life	✳► 22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism		
			29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin			
			19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	24. Larry Elder - Affluent security			
			15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	✳◄ 1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police	✳► 5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist			
			40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality	36. AOC - Impunity for Police	✳✳◄ 9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor			
				✳◄ 6. Chnge - Racism in American				
				35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples				

Legend

✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.05

✳✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.01

► z-Score for the statement is higher than in all other factors

◄ z-Score for the statement is lower than in all other factors

T3: The Critical Confronter

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
✳✳◀ 12. Breitbart - Kneel for God	41. Lebron James - Kneeling Side by Side	✳▶ 10. Students4Trump - Riots are Terrorism	7. Ted Nugent - Mertiocracy	25. Courtney Anh Design - Privilege	39. Campaign Zero - 8CantWait	✳✳▶ 26. Donald Trump - Law & Order	✳✳▶ 38. Pompeo - 1619 Project	✳✳▶ 42. Feminist - Haircut vs. Life
✳✳◀ 21. Rush Limbaugh - BLM too pervasive	30. ForAmerica - Lumped as bad apples	✳✳◀ 2. Dan Crenshaw - Riots	29. Occupy Democrats - Son Narratives	40. Ibram X Kendi - Police inseperable from Brutality	31. Chnge - BLM graphic	20. The_Female_Lead - Naming Systems	9. Feminist - Side of the Oppressor	4. NastyFeminism - spproportionate Shootings
		35. Dan Crenshaw - Bad Apples	19. Colin Kaepernick - Abolish Police	24. Larry Elder - Affluent security	34. TurningPointUSA - Protest v Crime	23. The Daily Show - No Right Way to Protest		
		15. Ted Cruz - Police injured	✳ 5. Breitbart - BLM is Marxist	✳✳▶ 37. Charlie Kirk - Looting and Riots	28. Ben Shapiro - Overcoming Sin	27. Campaign Zero - Policy Changes		
			✳◀ 22. Occupy Democrats - Black patriotism	✳✳ 32. Prager U - Minimal deaths in Police Interactions	1. Bree Newsome Bass - Abolish Police			
			33. NastyFeminism - Police are not Executioners	3. Greg Abbott - Back the Blue	6. Chnge - Racism in American			
			14. Candace Owens - BLM riots are destructive	13. The_Female_Lead - Violence	11. Taylor Swift - Systemic Oppression			
			8. Candace Owens - BLM is Terrorist Organization	16. Joe Walsh - All Lives Matter growth	36. AOC - Impunity for Police			
				17. Other 98% - All Lives Rebuttal				
				18. Prager U - Police go where Crime Is				

Legend

✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.05

✳✳ Distinguishing statement at P< 0.01

► z-Score for the statement is higher than in all other factors

◄ z-Score for the statement is lower than in all other factors

APPENDIX G

EXAMINING CORRELATIONS

Calculating Correlations

I conducted a series of correlations to examine the relationships between the different demographic data provided by participants and the participants' factor loadings for each factor. With a sample of 29 participants, when pursuing a significance level of $p<0.05$, the R-score needed to be equal to or greater than ± 0.37. At the $p<0.01$ level, the R-score would need to be ± 0.47. However, given the small sample size, any emergent correlations would benefit from confirmation with a larger sample.

I preface this brief interpretation I present in the appendix by noting that I did not include these correlations in the dissertation because they were not fully noteworthy in my interpretation. Additionally, the vast majority of the statistically significant correlations were just at the threshold of significance—in many cases, becoming significant due to rounding up. A few relationships would benefit from further exploration, but generally, the correlations across the data were inconsistent.

CivID

I first calculated correlations between my results from Knowles's (2018) CivID scale and the six factors (Table G1). Only one statistically significant relationship emerged—that teachers with a liberal orientation to teaching civics may be unlikely to take up the subject position of Data Debater. While this relationship merits further attention, I want to focus on the absence of relationships across the data more generally. I

believe the lack of relations might reflect the ways teachers drew on different discourses when they constructed their answers. Additionally, these tasks relied on different levels of abstraction and thus positioned the participants to respond in different ways. For instance, In the case of Knowles's scale, participants were asked to think about what should be included in a good civics education. This task is abstracted from concrete examples, thinking about the orientations and messages that ought to be included in the course. So, for example, teachers may have indicated discussing systemic injustices is important and were labeled as being critically oriented. Then, in my study, I asked the participants to engage with very specific content to describe which posts they would use in their teaching. So, in my study, they are perhaps confronted with less abstract notions of teaching about injustice—in the form of social media posts naming various systems of oppression. It is very likely the participants would experience these tasks quite differently and draw on different discourses to justify their response.

Table G1
Correlation Matrix: Factors & CivID

	CONSERVATIVE CivID	*LIBERAL CivID*	*CRITICAL CivID*
R1	0.17	0.07	0.01
R2	-0.21	-0.13	-0.21
R3	-0.25	0.17	0.30
T1	-0.13	-0.04	0.04
T2	0.08	**-0.37**	-0.26
T3	-0.17	-0.19	-0.14

Further, the various social media posts included in the Q-set may not have aligned with their own interpretations of the items on the CivID scale. So there could have been some misalignment between what they said they would do in the social studies classrooms across these two tasks. In short, it's one thing for the participants to indicate

what they think civics educations *should* teach in the CivID scale, but when looking at actual posts, these teachers may have begun to prioritize different things as the lessons become less abstracted.

Reaction vs. Teaching Factors

I also calculated correlations between the reaction-based and teaching-based factors (Table G2) to see if there were any significant relations between how they reacted and how they described teaching. These calculations determined that the Dismissive Scroller and the Data Debater had a statistically significant relationship, suggesting a teacher dismissive of posts with which they agreed may be likely to invite students to investigate posts with data. Similarly, the relationship between the Angered Constituent and the Critical Confronter could suggest those critical of Right-leaning politicians were more likely to engage students in more critical examinations of how people engage in protest. Further research could explore why these relationships may exist.

Table G2

Correlation Matrix: Reaction & Teaching Factors

	R1	*R2*	*R3*
T1	-0.04	-0.23	-0.05
T2	0.05	**0.38**	-0.08
T3	-0.00	0.07	**0.37**

Gender & Teaching Experience

Lastly, I calculated correlations based on gender (Table G3) and teaching experience (Table G4). As I noted in Chapter 6, The Critical Confronter negatively correlated with men and teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience. This negative correlation suggests that men and those with more than ten years of teaching experience were less likely to take up the position of Critical Confronter in the classroom.

Table G3

Correlation Matrix: Factors & Gender

	Man	*Woman*	*Genderqueer*
R1	-0.09	0.13	-0.12
R2	-0.13	0.02	0.31
R3	-0.08	0.05	0.07
T1	-0.04	0.11	-0.20
T2	0.16	-0.21	0.14
T3	**-0.47**	0.36	0.29

Table G4

Correlation Matrix: Factors & Teaching Experience

	Preservice	*1-5 years*	*6-10 years*	*>10 years*
R1	-0.24	0.18	0.25	-0.14
R2	**0.38**	-0.29	-0.27	0.10
R3	0.12	-0.07	-0.16	0.08
T1	-0.23	0.25	0.13	-0.12
T2	0.30	-0.24	-0.31	0.18
T3	0.28	0.01	0.09	**-0.41**