ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	SAY HER NAME: AN ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS
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Among the COVID pandemic, record unemployment and economic strife, and the 2020 election cycle, another societal issue rose to national conversation in 2020: police brutality. Millions of people across the country protested against the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black citizens who were victims of police brutality in 2020. Black Lives Matter content flooded social media, and millions of users showed their support for the movement online. Cultivation theory suggests that people tend to support the dominant narrative that is presented by the media they consume.

This research seeks to understand if students who use social media and see their peers post pro-Black Lives Matter content are also supportive of Black Lives Matter. This research also asks what behaviors students perform to show their support for Black Lives Matter both on and offline. A survey was sent out to UMD students

that asked about student attitudes towards police, their social media usage, and their support for Black Lives Matter. The survey showed that most respondents saw their peers posting pro-Black Lives Matter content. Respondents also tended to view Black Lives Matter positively and performed behaviors in support of Black Lives Matter online and offline. These results show that young people are getting their news from social media, and that their beliefs about Black Lives Matter and police could be cultivated by what they view online. The results also indicate that respondents were more engaged with Black Lives Matter in 2020 and 2021 than in years prior. Overall, this data suggests that information about Black Lives Matter is proliferating on the social platforms that young adults use, and that this age group is moving away from using traditional media sources.

SAY HER NAME: AN ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

2020 was a year of immense social change. Between the COVID-19 pandemic, a tumultuous election cycle, and the visibility of police brutality, racial and socioeconomic inequality have been at the forefront of national conversation (Altman 2020). In May 2020, Black Lives Matter, which is a social media movement focused on racial injustice in the criminal justice system, rose to prominence again after the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police officers (Altman 2020). #BlackLivesMatter and related hashtags were used millions of times as users discussed police brutality, racism in the criminal justice system, and racial inequities exposed and worsened by the pandemic (Beckman 2020). The rapid expansion of official Black Lives Matter profiles on social media exposed millions of people to firsthand, near real-time accountings of police brutality and associated backlash.

Black Lives Matter initially rose to prominence in 2013 as a social media movement after the death of Trayvon Martin, who was killed by an armed citizen. Black Lives Matter quickly became a trending social media topic that exposed racist police practices across America. Support for Black Lives Matter has led many protests since 2013, including events such as the Baltimore and Ferguson protests, which were launched because of the police killings of Black civilians (Wozniack, Drakulik, and Calfano 2020). These protests were covered on traditional news outlets, but because of social media, people on the ground could broadcast as well (Ovide

2020). According to Dr. Omar Wasow, in an interview with the New York Times, social media allows for a broader audience "to see a reality that has been entirely visible to some people and invisible to others" (Ovide 2020). Social media shows images of brutality and racism that are unavoidably transparent; for example, Philando Castile's death was live streamed by his girlfriend (Altman 2020). Police brutality is logged on social media and produced as evidence to any user that is curious about Black Lives Matter or police brutality.

Social media has been an activist tool since its inception; many social movements use online platforms to spread their messages and organize. For example, livestreams allow any user to view what someone is experiencing in real time at a protest or in an instance of police brutality (Carney 2016). Social media allows for quick and constant messaging that a user can share with a tap of a button to all of their followers. Understanding how social media can help a group with their mission is imperative for social movement researchers.

There is a significant gap in the literature regarding the role that social media plays in shaping perceptions of police legitimacy and Black Lives Matter. Overall, there is a growing body of literature that addresses the role of media in forming beliefs about police, but not much of that literature addresses social media specifically (Intravia, Wolff, Piquero 2018). This thesis seeks to address the relationship between social media consumption and attitudes towards police and Black Lives Matter. The motivating question behind this research asks if the use of

social media to engage with Black Lives Matter leads students to support Black Lives Matter. Specifically, this study analyzes the relationship between an individual's support for Black Lives Matter, their peers' support of Black Lives Matter, and their social media usage. This study addresses the gap in cultivation theory literature regarding social media and its potential to cultivate beliefs, as well as addressing the gap in the literature in how much the Black Lives Matter movement has proliferated on social media. In the next section, I review the history of the BLM, research on social media movements, and prior studies on support for police, and then I discuss cultivation theory as a framework for understanding the relationship between social media usage and college students' attitudes towards Black Lives Matter. I then examine the data, sample, and the survey instrument. I conclude by discussing the findings, limitations, and implications of this research.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Arguments

Black Lives Matter and Social Media Movements

Black Lives Matter

Since 2013, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) has grown into a racial justice movement grown to encompass a racial equality movement founded on the belief that there is deep rooted racial injustice in the criminal justice system and other institutions (Black Lives Matter). Between 2013 and 2020, Black Lives Matter grew from a hashtag to a national movement (Black Lives Matter). Black Lives Matter has 40 local chapters throughout Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom (Black Lives Matter). The organizers of Black Lives Matter state that:

> "Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression" (Black Lives Matter).

Black Lives Matter's ubiquity is also shown when "other groups, organizations, and individuals used it to amplify anti-Black racism across the country, in all the ways it showed up" (Black Lives Matter). Thus, Black Lives Matter, in this research, is defined as any content shared or posted on social media related to anti-Black racism, police brutality, or intersections of racism and other societal inequities. The reason more content is included is because Black Lives Matter themselves post about many racial injustices beyond the criminal justice system (Appendix A, Appendix B). The hashtag #Black Lives Matter has been used millions of times (Cohen 2020). This

pervasiveness has allowed millions of people to look at content related to the movement without needing to follow the main accounts from the actual organization.

Research on Black Lives Matter shows that the movement is a way for affected citizens, rather than traditional media sources, to control the narrative around police brutality (Carney 2016). Social media is a useful tool for social movements because users can post videos, pictures, or other primary sources that add credibility to their message (Mundt, Ross, and Burnett 2018). The ability for users to both post and view unfiltered content is a change from traditional media sources, such as the news, that often have an interest in swaying the narrative surrounding the content (Carney 2016). In thinking about how digital technology affects movements, one can reflect on the events surrounding Rodney King's brutalization. King was the victim of police brutality in 1992; a citizen recorded multiple officers beating King at a traffic stop, which in turn sparked riots for days in Los Angeles following the acquittal of the police involved (Wozniack, Drakulik, and Calfano 2020). More recently, users reshared the video of George Floyd's death at the hands of Derek Chauvin; his death led to months of protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement (Altman 2020). In the years between Rodney King and George Floyd, there are multiple instances where Black deaths at the hands of police officers are recorded for the world to see (Altman 2020). Because people have the technology to record and post evidence instantaneously, the extent of police brutality is catalogued online. However, the presence of Black Lives Matter content has not always been welcomed by social media users.

Black Lives Matter has faced resistance from citizens, most notably #AllLivesMatter and the Blue Lives Matter movements (Carney 2016; Solomon and Martin 2018). Initially, the primary resistance to the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter was the use of #AllLivesMatter, which was intended to engage in colorblind rhetoric; this is rhetoric that claims that racism has ended, and equality has been achieved (Carney 2016). Carney (2016) found that the main users of #AllLivesMatter were young white women, who felt offended that #BlackLivesMatter focused on only Black lives. One example of a tweet pulled from the #AllLivesMatter hashtag is the following: "#AllLivesMatter All of them. Black, white, Asian, mixed race, you name it. ALL LIVES MATTER" (Carney, 2016).

Another form of resistance to #BlackLivesMatter is the Blue Lives Matter movement, which focuses on police victimization. As Solomon and Martin (2018) address, Blue Lives Matter grew as a countermovement to Black Lives Matter. It is, in a sense, backlash from police supporters to the villainization of police on social media. The movement offers support to officers and their families and recognizes them for their work, while claiming that they are victimized by Black protestors and their allies (Solomon and Martin 2018). Blue Lives Matter has become a cultural movement much like Black Lives Matter has, although its central goal is to counter Black Lives Matter, while Black Lives Matter focuses on the history of racial injustice as well as contemporary injustices (Solomon and Martin 2018). Solomon and Martin (2018) point out that without Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter would not exist; it formed as a direct response to Black Lives Matter.

Social Movements on Social Media

Social media movements have used social media platforms as a tool for coalition building and dissemination of their mission. Social media "facilitates coalition building" by connecting looser networks and individuals with similar beliefs (Mundt et al 2018; pg. 9). One can look to a popular Facebook trend as an example of networks building; a few years ago, many users participated in the ice bucket challenge to spread awareness of ALS (Nien 2017). This example points to how social media can facilitate networking online and offline. Activists can use social media knowing they are already connected to others who agree or have similar interests to them, which can snowball support for issues online and offline (Mundt et al 2018; Nien 2017). Offline actions include protesting, campaigning, and donating. People may be drawn into movements if they see that the movement stands against a "common enemy" (Nien 2017: 209). For Black Lives Matter, the movement initially cast police as the enemy. While police are still the central focus, the movement has grown to fight against other social injustices.

In the context of Black Lives Matter, some social media users have drawn a broader swath to show that anti-black racism exists in other institutions beyond the criminal justice system. Small local networks have formed with similar missions to Black Lives Matter. One example is Black Terps Matter, a movement that was started by University of Maryland students who want to draw attention to racism at the university (Black Terps Matter). Appendix C and D show an Instagram post from the Black Terps Matter account that lists their demands to the campus to create racial

equity and divest from the University of Maryland Police (Appendix C, Appendix D; Black Terps Matter). The movement specifically addresses issues of racism in the University of Maryland Police Department, the admissions department, and other university decisions, such as its utilization of prison labor to make furniture for the dormitories (Black Terps Matter). This movement does not have an official affiliation with the Black Lives Matter organization, but its name and goals mirror that of the broader movement. Black Terps Matter is just one example of the coalition building of the Black Lives Matter movement through social media.

Social media allows movements to be disseminated to users who are active on social media as a networking tool. Social movements can expand efficiently on social media because of the elimination of news coming from traditional media outlets; instead, news comes from activists and citizens through social media (Caren, Andrews, Lu 2020). Caren et al (2020) note that Twitter and Facebook are the most efficient platforms for the spread of social media movements, although the users of those platforms may differ in important ways. Generation Z, those born after 1995, are more likely to use social media to network with others than older generations (Fietkiewicz, Lins, Baran, Stock 2016). The implications for Generation Z and their mentality toward social media could help explain why they are involved with Black Lives Matter. While Generation Z tends to use social media actively by creating content and engaging with others, older generations are likely to use social media passively by viewing and engaging with content that already exists (Fietkiewicz et al 2016).

An important aspect of building a social movement on social media is how the organizers draw in potential allies and place them within the movement. Allies are members of the more advantaged group who can use their societal status to legitimize and empower the oppressed group (Wilkins, Livingstone, and Levine 2019). As Wilkins et al (2019) argue, allies are both a blessing and a curse. While allies can aid in growing the movement and conferring some of their status to the movement, they also may grow to dominate the group because of that status (Wilkins et al 2019). Black Lives Matter supporters have addressed this issue on social media by reminding white users to amplify Black and Indigenous People of Color's (BIPOC) voices instead of their own on issues surrounding race (Appendix E). There is specific rhetoric that members of the movement use that pushes white people to show their support by posting content directly targeted at white users, reminding them to use their voice to support the movement (Appendix F, Appendix G). Wilkins et al (2019) explain that this type of rhetoric forces a "moral bind" because "if they continue to be silent in the face of anti-Black violence, it suggests that they are racist and opponents of the movement." White users either must show their support or face the idea that they do not appear to support of Black Lives Matter.

Many youths see social media as an effective way to build social movements and bring attention to important issues; however, they also found that the majority of those polled think social media leads to "slacktivism," which does not help the movement materially beyond social media (Auxier and McClain 2020). Slacktivism

is the term that scholars use to refer to members of social media movements who do not actually perform any activism outside of social media (Mundt et al 2018). This is harmful because those members may not actually support the movement but use social media to present themselves as activists. Users have addressed slacktivists (sometimes called performative activists) by calling them out and offering more ways to stay involved as allies. Conversely, by sharing information or publicly supporting the movement, slacktivists disseminate the information that may reach people who could be more involved with the movement. Even if someone is not doing work outside of social media, by sharing information and direct evidence of racism, others may be pulled into the movement (Mundt et al 2018). Although slacktivists are not the most engaged supporters, they still serve a role in the propagation of content.

Perceptions of Police, Police Brutality, and Youth

Youth attitudes towards police legitimacy are varied but play a role in their support for Black Lives Matter. Young black men tend to be resentful and distrusting of police because of bad personal experiences (Gau and Brunson 2010). Additionally, their attitudes often have to do with their perceptions of how police treat people that look like them (Gau and Brunson 2010). This research could be relevant to online delegitimization of police because those who do not experience police misconduct can understand why Black people and other people of color feel targeted by police (Gau and Brunson 2010).

Other researchers have found that youth are indifferent towards police, compared to adults who generally have more solid beliefs about police efficacy (Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, Winfree 2001). A potential explanation for why youth support Black Lives Matter is that they were already easier to sway in their beliefs about police legitimacy, and Black Lives Matter appeared at the right time in their formative years to delegitimize police. If that is true, then social media likely plays a role in shaping youth perceptions of police and race relations.

An important aspect of police brutality and perceptions comes from the ripple effect of instances of misconduct and the disruption of procedural justice. Miller, Davis, Henderson, Markovic, and Ortiz (2004) note that negative experiences with police have more of an influence on an individual's beliefs about police than positive coverage of police does. Thus, avoiding misconduct is more important than managing positive coverage of police in keeping a community's trust in the police (Miller et al 2004). Procedural justice, or the idea that police act in a manner that enforces rules in an equitable way, is an aspect of individuals' trust in policing (Nadal, Davidoff, Allicock 2017). Individuals who do not see police acting in a procedurally just manner will not respect the officers' authority or respect the institution of policing (Nadal et al 2017). The visibility of police who do not act in accordance with procedural justice is clearer when police are recorded brutalizing citizens. Instead of this misconduct only impacting individuals directly in a community, it is now widely accessible to anyone on the internet.

Prior research has found that viewing brutality negatively affects individual's attitudes towards police (Mullinix, Bolsen, Norris 2020). Individuals in Mullinix et al's (2020) study were exposed to footage of police brutality. Participants either viewed Philando Castile's death or Timothy Harris's non-lethal encounter with police. In the post-test, participants in both groups felt negative emotional responses and they held negative views on the legitimacy of police (Mullinix et al 2020). This study provides evidence that direct imagery of brutality is influential on the emotions of viewers, regardless of race. One of the catalysts for the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 was the video of George Floyd's death circulating on social media. According to this research, it is likely that the video sparked momentum because it evoked negative emotional responses in viewers that made them more willing to support Black Lives Matter.

Theoretical Framework

Cultivation Theory

A theory that scholars look to when researching media effects on beliefs is cultivation theory (Wozniack, Drakulik, and Calfano 2020). Cultivation theory hypothesizes that as an individual consumes more media, they are more likely to support the dominant narrative presented in that media (Gerbner 1970). Cultivation theory informs the current research because social media is a source of news for some individuals. Intravia, Wolff, and Piquero's (2018) study on forms of media and attitudes towards police found that there was a slight positive association for white

social media users with police legitimacy. This result shows that white participants generally believed in police legitimacy. The authors suggest that further research could be done on the area of social media and attitudes, and their research does not address Black Lives Matter (Intravia et al 2018).

Social media is filled with accounts of police brutality from users who have firsthand experience with policing, either as victims of brutality or as police themselves (Appendix H). Looking back to social movements on social media, Black Lives Matter allows individuals to share their perceptions of events and control their own narrative, publicly (Carney 2016). Appendix I exemplifies a Black woman tweeting about the harmful nature of the mainstream news cycle after George Floyd's death. This tweet is an example of reclaiming the public perception of police brutality.

Cultivation theory addresses the methods in which media becomes salient to consumers who do not have personal experience with what the media portrays. Individuals who do not have their own personal experience with what they are viewing in the media may be more susceptible to cultivated beliefs (Intravia, Wolff, Paez, Gibbs 2017). Without their own "real-world" experiences, the only exposure individuals in these circumstances have is what they see from others (Callanan 2012). In the context of Black Lives Matter, these "cultivated" individuals would be youth who have never experienced police brutality either directly or vicariously through someone they know. Because they do not have their own experiences to guide their

views on policing, they turn to the media, which must come from other people. Now that brutality is being captured and shared online, these videos and personal testimonies could be the most salient evidence of brutality for users. Considering that youth use social media to communicate, they can share their beliefs and the evidence they see with their peers.

Although cultivation theory is a growing theory, it is not without critics. Critics of the theory argue that it is hard to measure what media an individual consumes and how that media is influential on an individual's beliefs (Wozniack, Drakulik, and Calfano 2020). Wozniack et al (2020) critique cultivation theory because the type of media that an individual chooses could lead to a selection bias effect, which confounds the relationship that cultivation theory claims. Another critique that they pose is the lack of studies on the heterogeneity of media because each cultivation theory study tends to focus on one type of media at a time (Wozniack et al 2020). Although cultivation theory is controversial, there is a growing body of literature that informs cultivation theory and police perceptions (Intravia et al 2018; Wozniack et al 2020). Wozniack et al (2020) postulate that accumulated media exposure may be influential in an individual's attitudes towards police, and that there is a need for more research to address cultivation theory and its place in the field of criminology.

Current Study

This research hopes to center cultivation theory as a potential explanation for the proliferation of Black Lives Matter content on social media and associated support by social media users. There is a gap in the literature that does not address social media usage and types of content viewed on those platforms and attitudes towards Black Lives Matter. The current study seeks to answer three research questions on the relationship between social media, beliefs towards Black Lives Matter, and support for the movements:

1. How have students engaged with Black Lives Matter on social media?
2. How have students shown their support for Black Lives Matter offline?
3. Do students who see their peers post pro-Black Lives Matter content tend to support Black Lives Matter?

These questions aim to identify the correlation between viewing content and showing support for Black Lives Matter. Additionally, this study seeks to understand what students have done to support Black Lives Matter (beyond posting) to see if students are mainly performance activists or if they are engaging with the movement beyond social media. The third question seeks to answer the question of whether students' views on Black Lives Matter are correlated with their peers' support.

Drawing on cultivation theory, I hypothesize that there is a correlation between viewing Black Lives Matter content and showing support online and offline.

I also hypothesize that students who see their peers support for Black Lives Matter also tend to show their support for Black Lives Matter online and offline.

Chapter 3: Data and Method

Sample

The data for this study were gathered using an online survey of undergraduate students at the University of Maryland. Students were reached using online advertisements posted on multiple departmental listservs, in which emails were sent to every student in each major. An advertisement for the study was also posted on Instagram to try to reach students of other majors, while keeping the sample limited to the University of Maryland. The advertisement method sought to survey as wide of a range of undergraduate at the University as possible. All participants are over 18 and currently enrolled at UMD. Students who responded to this survey were able to enter a lottery that offered five $10 cash rewards.

The sample size is 195 college students, both graduate and undergraduate, all at the University of Maryland (UMD). This is a convenience sample that looks at the emerging adult age group represented at the university. This sample overrepresents female students and underrepresents male students at the University of Maryland; female students comprise 48% of the general UMD population but 68% of the survey respondents. Male students represent 52% of the general UMD population but 28% of the survey respondents (University of Maryland, 2020). Additionally, white students are overrepresented in this sample at 62% of responses while only representing 46% of the student population. Asian and Pacific Islander students are slightly underrepresented in this sample at 17% while they comprise 19% of students. Black and African American students are both 12% of the sample and the student

population. Finally, Hispanic and Latino students are 10% of the student population but only 5% of the responses. Table 1 breaks down the demographics of this sample.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample, n=195

Demographic	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Race	Asian or Pacific Islander	36	17.14
	Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American	26	12.38
	Hispanic/Latino	12	5.71
	White	132	62.86
	Other	4	1.91
Gender	Male	58	28.90
	Female	133	68.56
	Non-Binary	2	1.03
	Other/Prefer Not to Say	1	0.52
Age	18-24	159	90.34
	25-34	10	5.68
	35-44	4	2.27
	45-52	3	1.70
Political View	Strongly Liberal	71	36.60
	Liberal	66	34.02
	Moderate	6	25.26
	Conservative	5	2.58
	Strongly Conservative	3	1.55

Measures

The dependent variables for this study are related to behaviors performed online and offline. The online behavior questions are designed to measure the first question about student behaviors. There were five questions asked about online behaviors:

1. Following accounts that post about Black Lives Matter
2. Posting content related to Black Lives Matter by sharing other's posts or creating their own content

3. Engaging with content related to Black Lives Matter by liking, commenting, or sending it to others
4. Engaging with content related to race by liking, commenting, or sending it to others
5. Posting or resharing content related to race.

Respondents were also asked about seven offline behaviors, which answers the second question of this study. They were asked if they performed these behaviors in 2020 or later and if they had performed them prior to 2020. Asking about these time frames meant that the behaviors could be compared against the independent variables separately to see if the events of 2020 had an effect on respondent's support. Participants were also asked if they would hypothetically perform these behaviors, to account for the possibility that participants did not have the means to donate, or attend protests this year due to the pandemic. These questions are designed to measure the concept of "slacktivism" and see how many students go beyond social media in their support for the movement. These behaviors are as follows:

6. Donating to Black Lives Matter or a related organization
7. Donating Directly to a Black individual
8. Going to a Black Lives Matter Protest
9. Read about racial inequality
10. Watched media about racial inequality
11. Talked to a family member about Black Lives Matter
12. Talked to a friend about Black Lives Matter

The independent variables for this study ask about what participants see on social media. This set of variables is highlighted in Table 2. These questions are used to compare against the behavior the respondent performs to see if there is a correlation between their behaviors and the content they're viewing from others in their social network.

Table 2. Independent Variables, n=195

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you see Black Lives Matter content on your social media feeds?	Yes	173	92.02
	No	11	5.85
	Unsure	4	2.13
Is this content Pro-Black Lives Matter?	Yes	166	96.51
	No	6	3.49
Do your friends post about Black Lives Matter?	Yes	174	94.57

Participants were also asked about their primary method of getting the news. The results of this question are in the table below. These are measured against the online behaviors that the respondents perform.

Table 3. Primary Method of Getting the News, n=195

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media	92	48.42
Watching TV	12	6.32
Reading news articles	72	37.89
Other	14	7.37

Analytical Strategy

For question one, simple tabulations were run for the online behaviors. They were then correlated with the method of getting the news responses. For question two, another tabulation was run for offline behaviors. For question three, all of the behaviors were correlated with the variable about friends posting about Black Lives Matter.

Chapter 4: Results

Question One

Question One asks how students engage with Black Lives Matter online. Respondents were more likely to act passively by following accounts that post about Black Lives Matter (71.51%) or engaging with content (74.19% and 72.97%) than they were to post or reshare content (54.59% and 48.92%). A tabulation of the questions about engagement are shown in Table Seven. These results show that the respondents are more likely to engage in every behavior than to not engage with the behavior, except for posting race related content. These results support the conclusion that college students are engaged with conversations about race and Black Lives Matter online.

Table 4. Online Behaviors

Behavior	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Follow accounts that post about Black Lives Matter	Yes	133	71.51
	No	53	28.49
Post content related to Black Lives Matter by sharing other's posts or creating their own content	Yes	101	54.59
	No	84	45.41
Engage with content related to Black Lives Matter by liking, commenting, or sending it to others	Yes	138	74.19
	No	48	25.81
Engage with content related to race by liking, commenting, or sending it to others	Yes	135	72.97
	No	50	27.03
Post or reshare content related to race	Yes	91	48.92
	No	95	51.08

Students were also asked about how they get their news. Nearly half (48%) of respondents said they get their news from social media. A pairwise correlation was run to see if respondents who primarily get their news from social media also perform other online behaviors. Table 4 below shows the correlation coefficients between each online behavior with the respondents who get their news primarily from social media. None of the relationships shows a significant correlation coefficient.

Table 5. Online behaviors and primary method of getting the news

Behavior	Primary method of getting the news
Friends post about Black Lives Matter	0.145
Follow accounts that post about Black Lives Matter	0.046
Post content related to Black Lives Matter by sharing other's posts or creating their own content	0.099
Engage with content related to Black Lives Matter by liking, commenting, or sending it to others	0.096
Engage with content related to race by liking, commenting, or sending it to others	0.039
Post or reshare content related to race	0.068

Question Two

Question Two asks how students engage with Black Lives Matter offline. A tabulation was run of each activity during 2020 and 2021, before 2020, and hypothetically. Table 5 includes all the responses to these questions. Participants were most likely to engage in reading and watching about racial inequality and talking to friends and family. Respondents were also more likely to engage in all behaviors in 2020 or 2021 than they were in years prior. For donating to Black Lives Matter or an individual and attending a protest, participants were most likely to engage in those

behaviors hypothetically. These results support the conclusion that people are more engaged with Black Lives Matter in 2020 and 2021 than they were in years prior. The hypothetical results show that participants may not have the means to donate or attend protests but would perform these behaviors if they had the ability.

Table 6. Offline Behavior Responses

	2020/2021 N (%)	Prior to 2020 N (%)	Hypothetical N (%)
Donating to Black Lives Matter or a related organization	98 (11.29)	40 (6.18)	143 (14.76)
Donating Directly to a Black individual	34 (3.92)	23 (3.55)	112 (11.56)
Going to a Black Lives Matter Protest	50 (5.76)	21 (3.25)	132 (13.62)
Read about racial inequality	172 (19.82)	163 (25.19)	147 (15.17)
Watched media about racial inequality	176 (20.28)	160 (24.73)	147 (15.17)
Talked to a family member about Black Lives Matter	167 (19.24)	115 (17.77)	143 (14.76)
Talked to a friend about Black Lives Matter	171 (19.70)	125 (19.32)	145 (14.96)

Question Three

Question Three asks if students who see their peers post about Black Lives Matter also tend to support Black Lives Matter. To answer this question, a pairwise correlation was run between friends posting about Black Lives Matter and all the online and 2020/2021 offline behaviors. All correlations were tested at a 0.05 significance level and the significant relationships are denoted by an asterisk in the tables. The table below shows the correlations for online behaviors with friends

posting about Black Lives Matter. Every online relationship except for engaging with race content was significantly correlated with friends posting about Black Lives Matter. Every offline relationship except attending protests was significantly correlated with friends posting about Black Lives Matter. These results support the hypothesis that seeing peers support Black Lives Matter leads students to show support for Black Lives Matter as well.

Table 7. All behavior correlations with friends post about Black Lives Matter

Behavior	Friends post about Black Lives Matter
Follow accounts that post about Black Lives Matter	0.222*
Post content related to Black Lives Matter by sharing other's posts or creating their own content	0.219*
Engage with content related to Black Lives Matter by liking, commenting, or sending it to others	0.305*
Engage with content related to race by liking, commenting, or sending it to others	0.139
Post or reshare content related to race	0.180*
Donating to Black Lives Matter or a related organization	0.205*
Donating Directly to a Black individual	0.114*
Going to a Black Lives Matter Protest	0.039
Read about racial inequality	0.121*
Watched media about racial inequality	0.154*
Talked to a family member about Black Lives Matter	0.076*
Talked to a friend about Black Lives Matter	0.367*

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Whereas the Black Lives Matter movement has grown in recent years, we know very little about how individuals engage with the movement via social media and if the usage of social media is associated with support online and offline. This study fills this void by examining behaviors performed by college students. The results of this study indicate that college students are engaged with Black Lives Matter both online and offline. The high levels of engagement with activities offline, such as talking to friends and family, suggest that students are trying to avoid "slacktivism." However, participants are more likely to do behaviors that require less effort, like talking to friends and reading about racism and Black Lives Matter. Because the results of the hypothetical behavior scenarios indicate that participants would like to donate or attend a protest, it is likely that without the pandemic and its associated financial hardships and physical distancing orders, participants would have been more likely to donate and attend protests. It was also significant that participants were more engaged in 2020 and 2021 than in years prior. This result suggests that the consumption of content about Black Lives Matter online may have lead people to act offline as well. Most of the respondents saw their peers posting about Black Lives Matter in a positive manner. The high association between seeing peers post about Black Lives Matter and performing pro-Black Lives Matter behaviors themselves indicates that there is a peer aspect to supporting Black Lives Matter.

Implications

The results include implications related to cultivation theory. A significant number of participants get their news on social media. This shift from traditional news sources, especially the shift away from watching television, should be reflected by future literature on cultivation theory. Additionally, the results show that participants are more engaged with Black Lives Matter in 2020 and 2021 than in years prior. While there is not causal relationship identified by this study, the increase in support in 2020 and 2021 suggests that students were more engaged with Black Lives Matter which could be due to seeing content online. Because being pro-Black Lives Matter is the dominant narrative in most of the respondents' feeds, and they are also supportive of Black Lives Matter, then a causal study would be able to determine if the individual views were formed because of the narrative presented.

There are also practical implications for this research. The first implication is that Black Lives Matter is on most student's social media feeds, so news outlets and other media sources should adapt to the online world of young adults. If people who see Black Lives Matter content also tend to support it themselves, then anyone who has an interest in forming support for a movement would be wise to try and spread their message using social media. This research also contributes evidence to research about social media movements. Black Lives Matter has proliferated into most of the respondents' feeds, and they themselves are engaging with the content. Other movements that want to gain support should try Black Lives Matter social media

strategies, because the movement and its associates have been effective at spreading their messages.

Limitations

This research has four main limitations. The first limitation is the sample, which is largely white and female. Additionally, most of the respondents are undergraduate students. While this demographic provided insight into college students' views, which was the purpose of the study, the sample is not nationally representative of this age group. Second, this research is also limited in its ability to make causal claims. The exploratory nature of the study provides evidence suggesting social media is associated with beliefs about BLM for this sample. Future research could build on this work to assess causality and the temporal order of the relationship. The third limitation of this research is the method in which participants were recruited. Some of the participants responded to an Instagram advertisement on the investigator's Instagram account, which samples students who use that platform. As such, the data about which platforms students use may be biased because of the way they found out about the study. However, all participants are from the University of Maryland, regardless of how they found out about the study. The final limitation is related to advertising; participants who support Black Lives Matter may have self-selected to participate more than those who do not. The advertisement summarized the study as asking about student's attitudes towards Black Lives Matter and police. Potential participants who are not pro-Black Lives Matter may have decided not to

take the survey when they read the advertisement. However, this research still provided important insights into students support for Black Lives Matter.

Future Directions

Future research on this topic should try to test a causal relationship between viewing content and supporting it. This research was correlational, and stronger cultivation theory evidence would come from analyzing the time aspect of the relationship. A future study could also ask more specific questions about what individuals post online and where they post it. Additionally, future research could ask about online behaviors before 2020 to see if there is a difference from behaviors respondents perform online in 2020 and 2021. A future study could utilize the data about attitudes towards police to understand how an individual's support for Black Lives Matter correlates with their attitudes towards police behavior.

Conclusion

Police brutality is one of the most pressing societal conversations today. With continued brutality, it is likely that college students will continue to engage with Black Lives Matter. This research showed that content about the movement is on almost everyone's social media feeds, and the content is largely in favor of the movement. It is evident that individuals are making the effort to engage with the movement both online and offline. The field of criminology would benefit from researching the effects of social media movements on individual's views, especially because Black Lives Matter focuses on overhauling the current criminal justice

system. With the amount of continued support that Black Lives Matter receives, it is likely that this movement will continue to spread and gain support from students.

Appendices

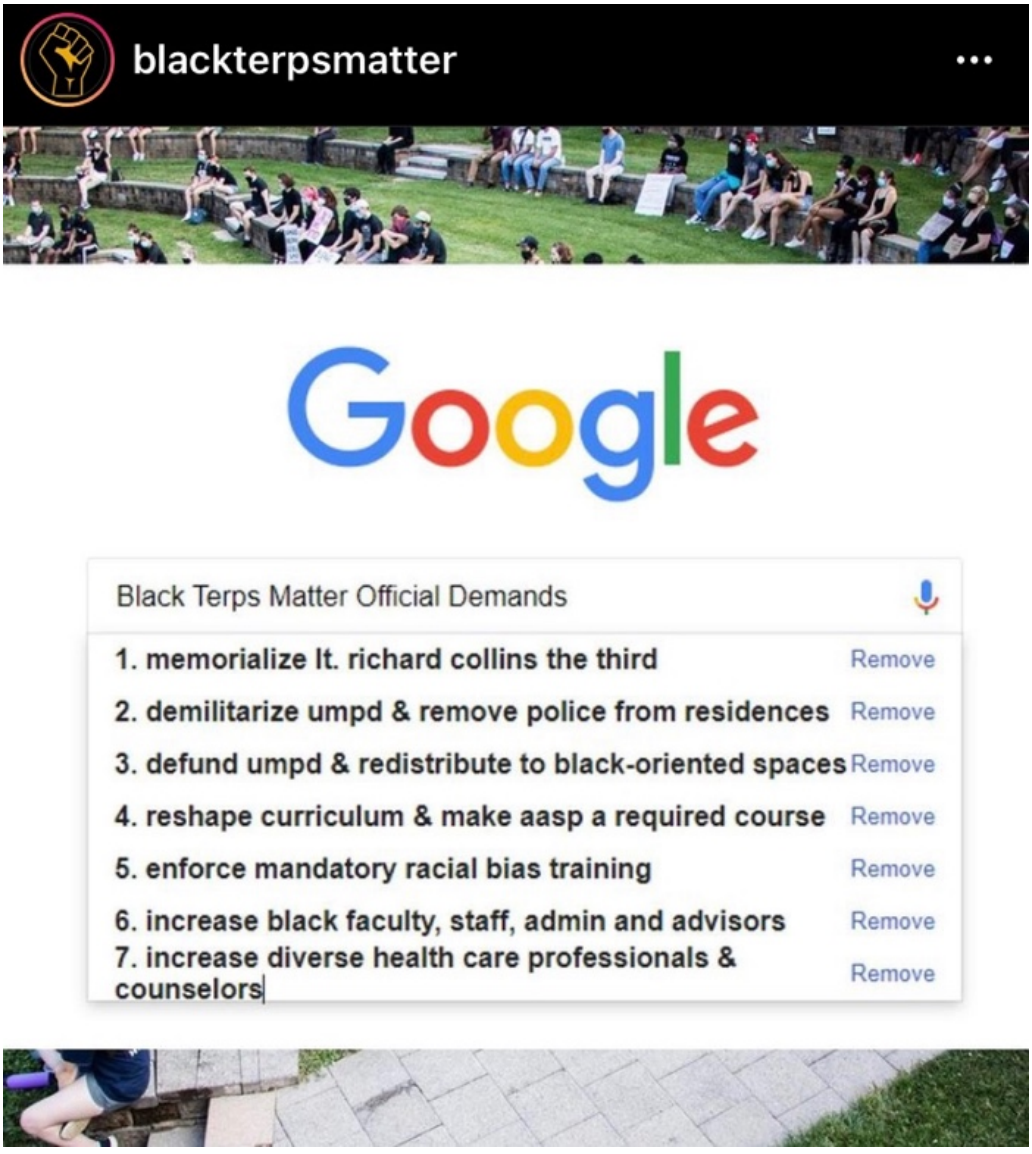
Appendix A

Black Lives Matter. @blklivesmatter. Twitter.

Appendix B

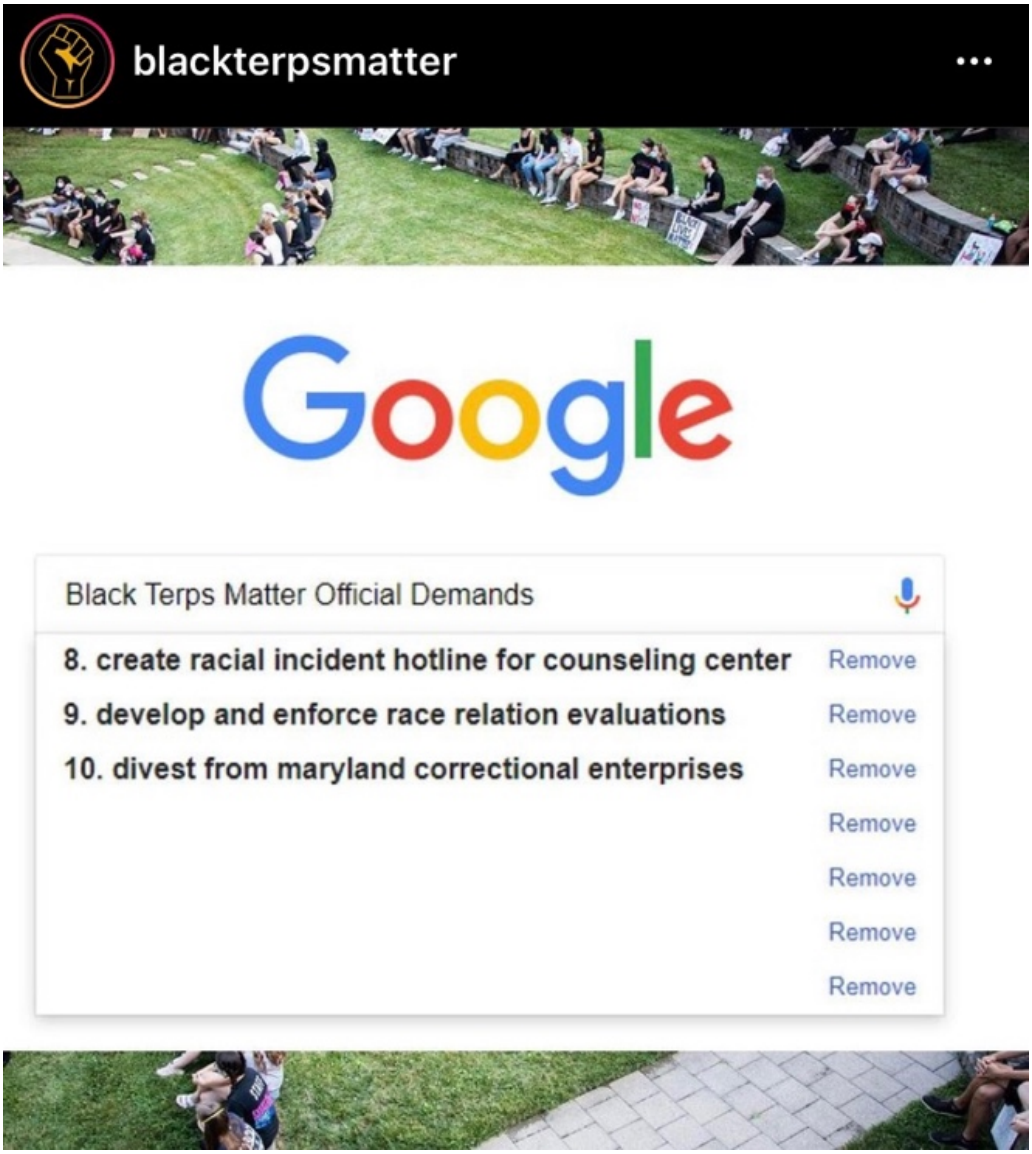
Black Lives Matter. @blklivesmatter. Twitter.

Appendix C



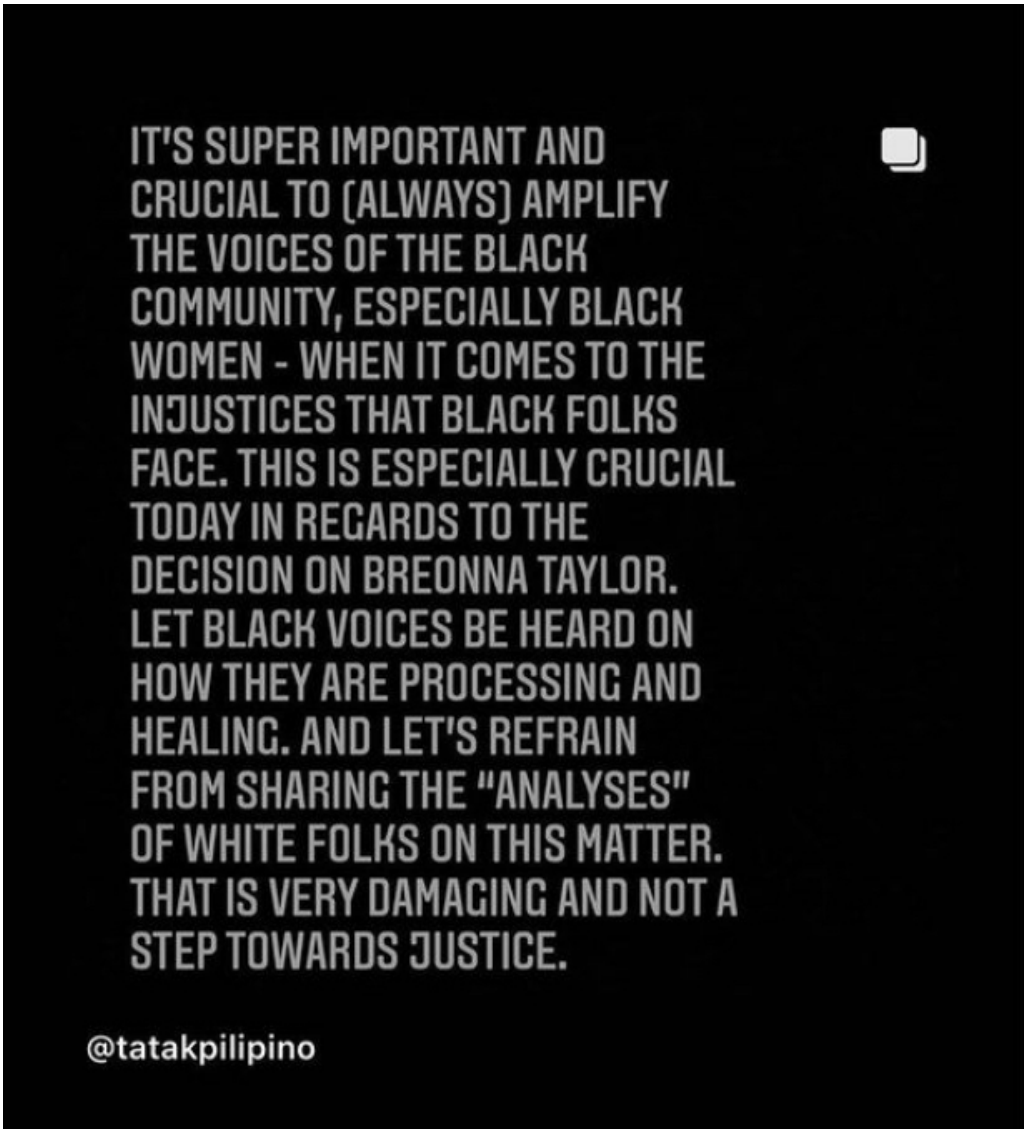
Black Terps Matter. @blackterpsmatter. Instagram.

Appendix D



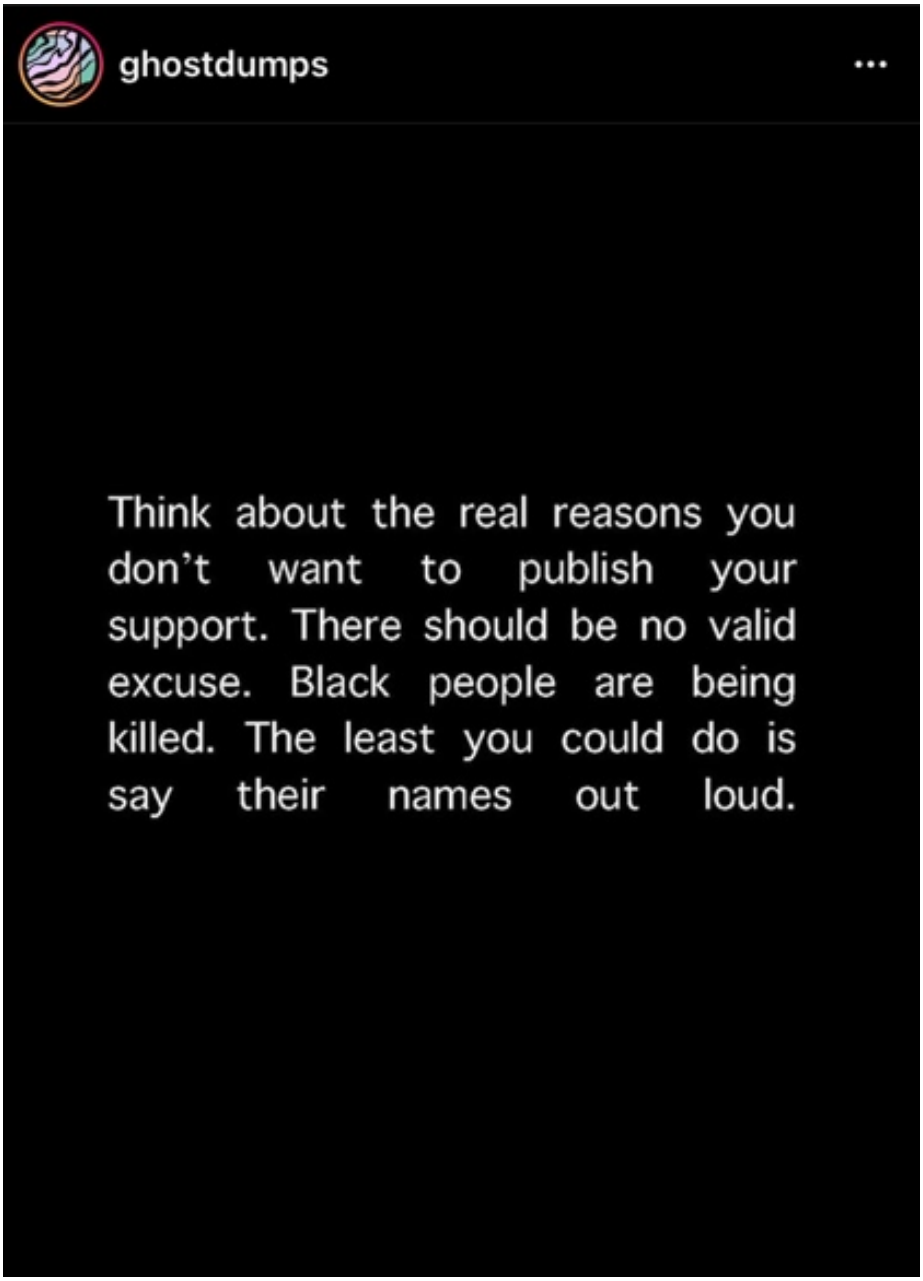
Black Terps Matter. @blackterpsmatter. Instagram.

Appendix E



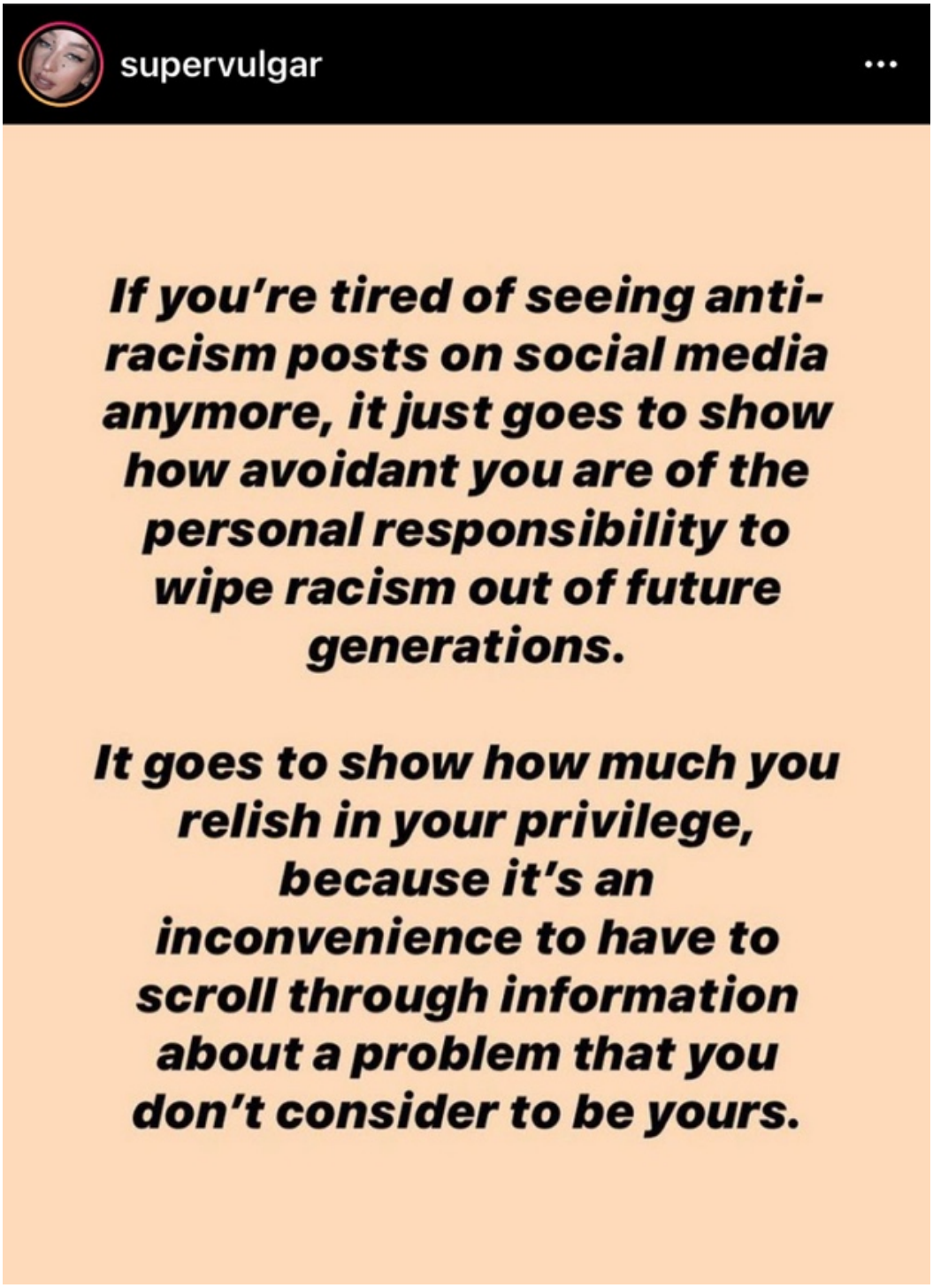
Yabut, Mark. @tatakpilipino. Instagram.

Appendix F



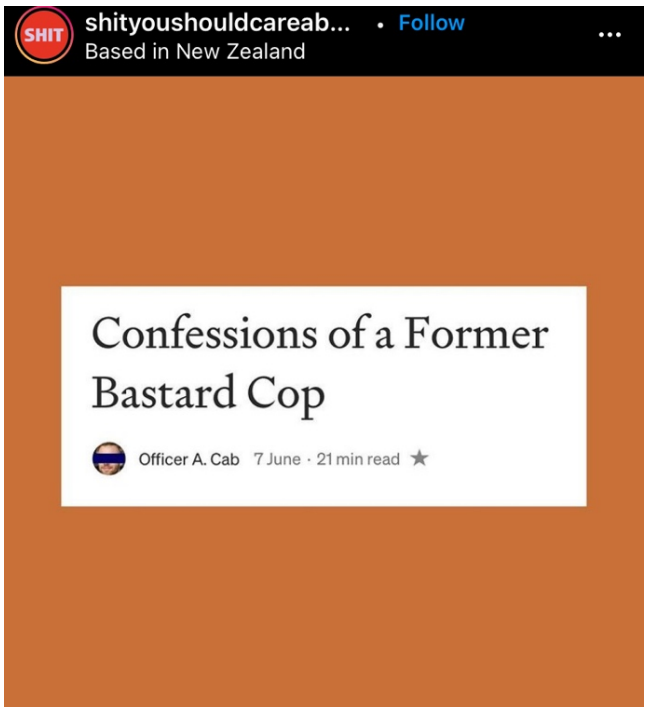
Serpa, Gabriella. @ghostdumps. Instagram.

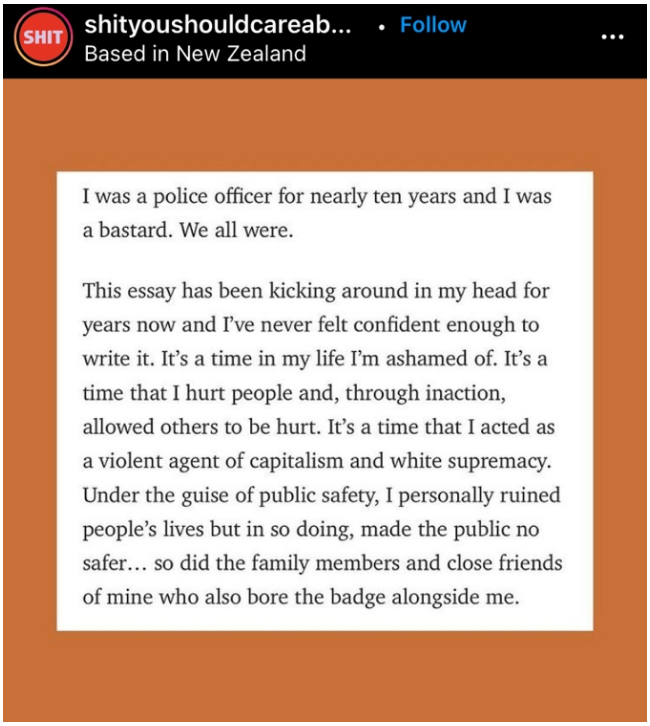
Appendix G

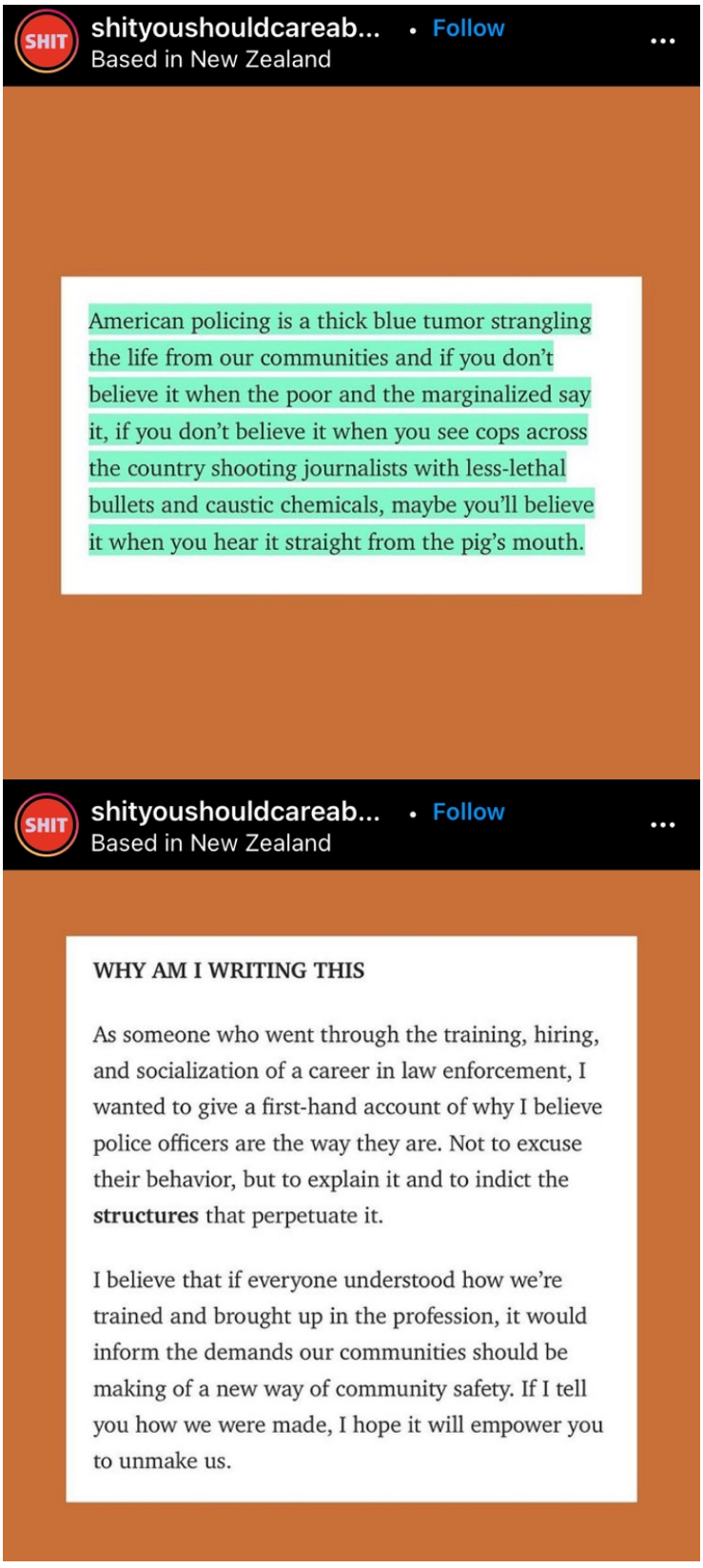


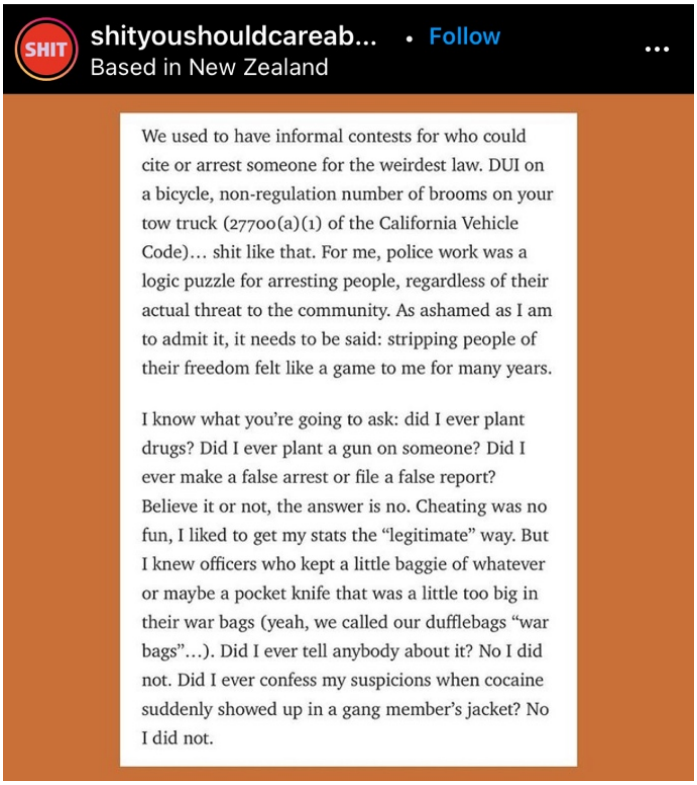
Vaz, Ana d'Utra. @supervulgar. Instagram.

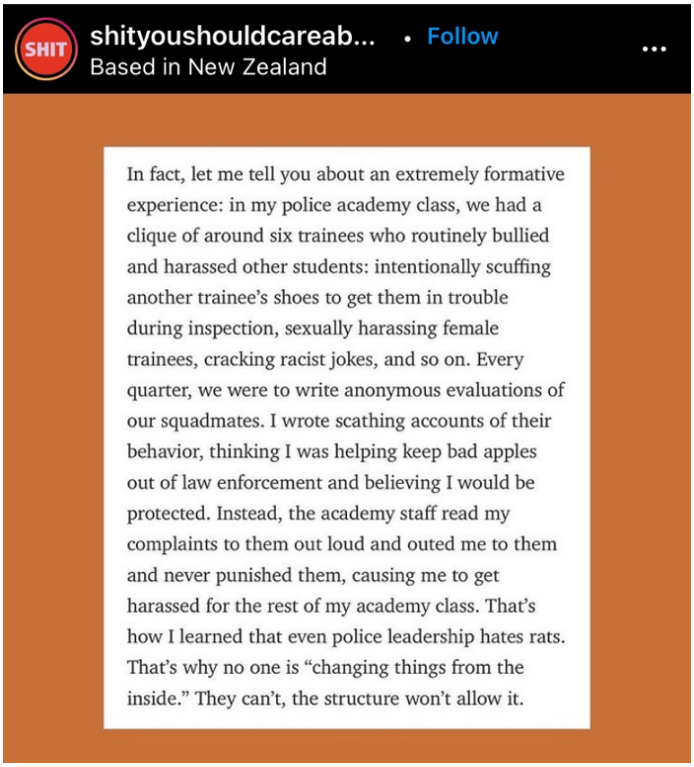
Appendix H

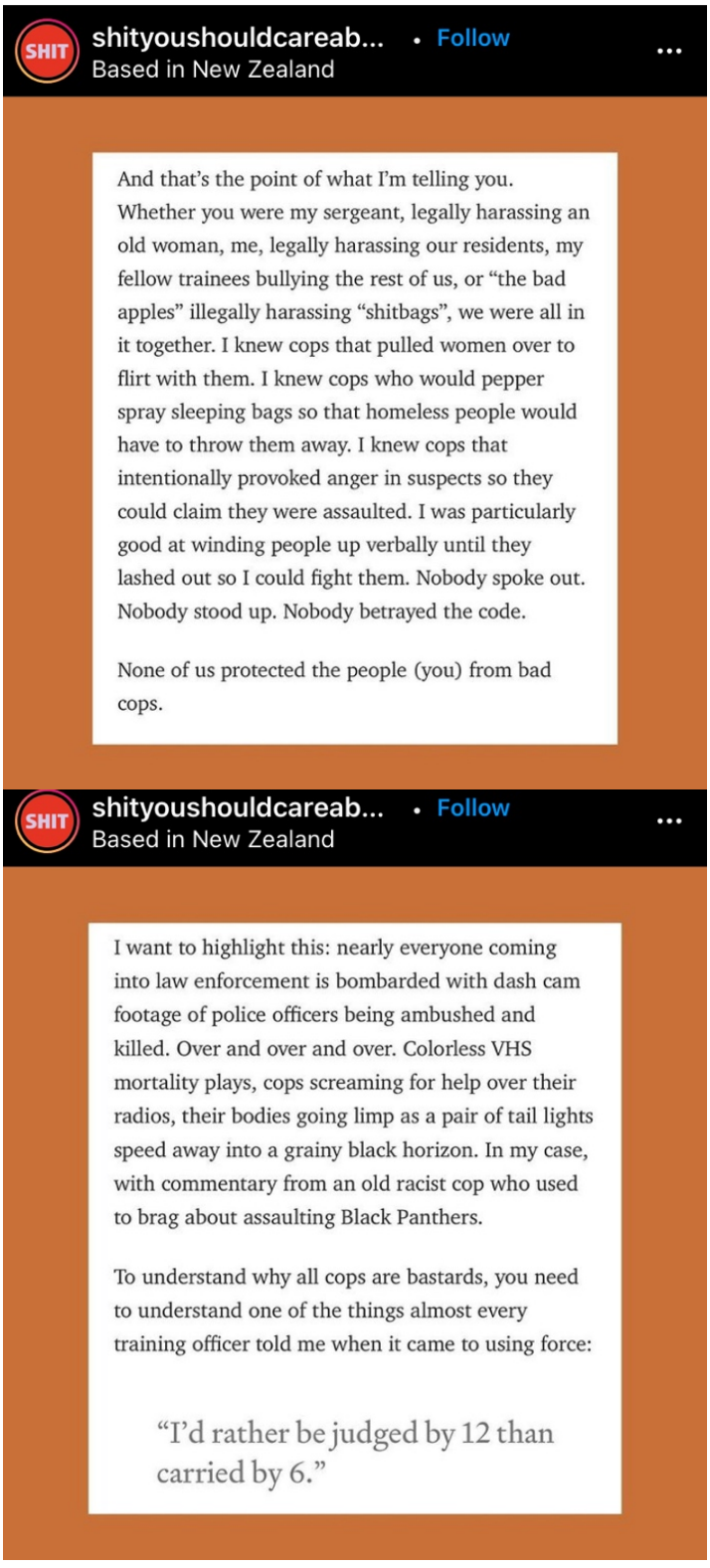

shityoushouldcareab...
Follow
Based in New Zealand
Confessions of a Former Bastard Cop
Officer A. Cab 7 June · 21 min read

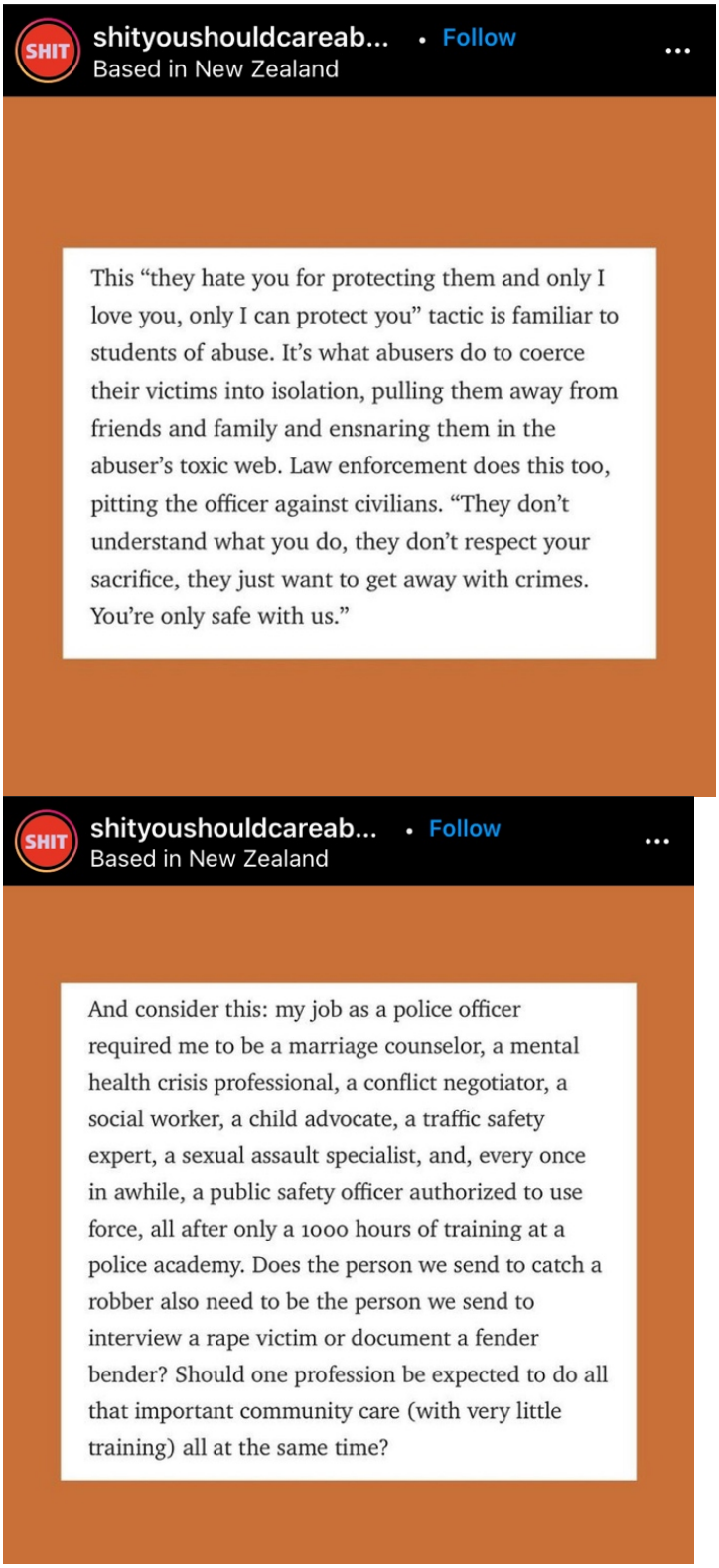

shityoushouldcareab...
Follow
Based in New Zealand
I was a police officer for nearly ten years and I was a bastard. We all were.
This essay has been kicking around in my head for years now and I've never felt confident enough to write it. It's a time in my life I'm ashamed of. It's a time that I hurt people and, through inaction, allowed others to be hurt. It's a time that I acted as a violent agent of capitalism and white supremacy. Under the guise of public safety, I personally ruined people's lives but in so doing, made the public no safer… so did the family members and close friends of mine who also bore the badge alongside me.


shityoushouldcareab... • Follow
Based in New Zealand
American policing is a thick blue tumor strangling the life from our communities and if you don't believe it when the poor and the marginalized say it, if you don't believe it when you see cops across the country shooting journalists with less-lethal bullets and caustic chemicals, maybe you'll believe it when you hear it straight from the pig's mouth.
shityoushouldcareab... • Follow
Based in New Zealand
WHY AM I WRITING THIS
As someone who went through the training, hiring, and socialization of a career in law enforcement, I wanted to give a first-hand account of why I believe police officers are the way they are. Not to excuse their behavior, but to explain it and to indict the **structures** that perpetuate it.
I believe that if everyone understood how we're trained and brought up in the profession, it would inform the demands our communities should be making of a new way of community safety. If I tell you how we were made, I hope it will empower you to unmake us.


shityoushouldcareab...
Follow
Based in New Zealand
We used to have informal contests for who could cite or arrest someone for the weirdest law. DUI on a bicycle, non-regulation number of brooms on your tow truck (27700(a)(1) of the California Vehicle Code)… shit like that. For me, police work was a logic puzzle for arresting people, regardless of their actual threat to the community. As ashamed as I am to admit it, it needs to be said: stripping people of their freedom felt like a game to me for many years.
I know what you're going to ask: did I ever plant drugs? Did I ever plant a gun on someone? Did I ever make a false arrest or file a false report? Believe it or not, the answer is no. Cheating was no fun, I liked to get my stats the "legitimate" way. But I knew officers who kept a little baggie of whatever or maybe a pocket knife that was a little too big in their war bags (yeah, we called our dufflebags "war bags"…). Did I ever tell anybody about it? No I did not. Did I ever confess my suspicions when cocaine suddenly showed up in a gang member's jacket? No I did not.


shityoushouldcareab...
Follow
Based in New Zealand
In fact, let me tell you about an extremely formative experience: in my police academy class, we had a clique of around six trainees who routinely bullied and harassed other students: intentionally scuffing another trainee's shoes to get them in trouble during inspection, sexually harassing female trainees, cracking racist jokes, and so on. Every quarter, we were to write anonymous evaluations of our squadmates. I wrote scathing accounts of their behavior, thinking I was helping keep bad apples out of law enforcement and believing I would be protected. Instead, the academy staff read my complaints to them out loud and outed me to them and never punished them, causing me to get harassed for the rest of my academy class. That's how I learned that even police leadership hates rats. That's why no one is "changing things from the inside." They can't, the structure won't allow it.


shityoushouldcareab... • Follow
Based in New Zealand
And that's the point of what I'm telling you. Whether you were my sergeant, legally harassing an old woman, me, legally harassing our residents, my fellow trainees bullying the rest of us, or "the bad apples" illegally harassing "shitbags", we were all in it together. I knew cops that pulled women over to flirt with them. I knew cops who would pepper spray sleeping bags so that homeless people would have to throw them away. I knew cops that intentionally provoked anger in suspects so they could claim they were assaulted. I was particularly good at winding people up verbally until they lashed out so I could fight them. Nobody spoke out. Nobody stood up. Nobody betrayed the code.
None of us protected the people (you) from bad cops.
shityoushouldcareab... • Follow
Based in New Zealand
I want to highlight this: nearly everyone coming into law enforcement is bombarded with dash cam footage of police officers being ambushed and killed. Over and over and over. Colorless VHS mortality plays, cops screaming for help over their radios, their bodies going limp as a pair of tail lights speed away into a grainy black horizon. In my case, with commentary from an old racist cop who used to brag about assaulting Black Panthers.
To understand why all cops are bastards, you need to understand one of the things almost every training officer told me when it came to using force:
"I'd rather be judged by 12 than carried by 6."



@shityoushouldcareabout. Instagram.

Appendix I

Newsome Bass, Bree. @BreeNewsome. Twitter.

Appendix L

1. What is your age?
    a. Type in
2. What is your gender identity?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-binary
    d. Prefer not to say
    e. Type in
3. What year are you?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior
    e. Graduate student
4. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?
    a. Asian or Pacific Islander
    b. Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
    c. Latino or Hispanic
    d. Native American or Alaskan Native
    e. White or Caucasian
    f. Other: (Please Specify)
5. What is your major or majors?
    a. Dropdown
6. Where are you from?
    a. Dropdown list of states
7. What political party do you identify with?
    a. Republican
    b. Democrat
    c. Independent
    d. Other
    e. No preference
8. Who did you vote for in the 2020 presidential election?
    a. Joe Biden
    b. Donald Trump
    c. Someone else
    d. Did not vote
9. In terms of your general political views, are you…
    a. Strongly liberal
    b. Liberal
    c. Moderate
    d. Conservative
    e. Strongly conservative
10. In general, how often do you think police officers stop people on the street without good reason?[1]

a. Never
b. On occasion
c. Fairly often
d. Very often

11. In general, how often do you think police officers use excessive force (more force than necessary) against civilians?
    a. Never
    b. On occasion
    c. Fairly often
    d. Very often
12. How common do you think corruption (such as bribery) is in departments nationwide?
    a. Very uncommon
    b. Fairly uncommon
    c. Fairly common
    d. Very common
13. In general, do you think police treat poor people better, the same, or worse than wealthy people?
    a. Treat poor people much better than wealthy people
    b. Treat poor people somewhat better than wealthy people
    c. Treat poor people the same as wealthy people
    d. Treat poor people somewhat worse than wealthy people
    e. Treat poor people much worse than wealthy people
14. In general, do you think police treat Black people better, the same, or worse than white people?
    a. Treat Black people much better than white people
    b. Treat Black people somewhat better than white people
    c. Treat Black people the same as white people
    d. Treat Black people somewhat worse than white people
    e. Treat Black people much worse than white people
15. Have you been stopped by a police officer within the past 12 months?
    a. Yes, stopped while walking
    b. Yes, stopped while driving
    c. No, I was not stopped by an officer within the past 12 months
16. Do you believe that police have a higher presence in predominantly Black communities than predominantly white ones?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure
17. If yes, do you believe the higher presence in these communities is justified?
    a. Yes
    b. No
18. In the past month, which of these social media platforms have you used?
    a. Instagram
    b. Twitter
    c. Facebook

d. TikTok
e. Snapchat
f. Reddit
g. Gab
h. MeWe
i. Rumble
j. Other (please specify)

19. On an average day, how much time would you spend on each of the following platforms?

Total Hours	Less than one hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	5 or more hours
Instagram					
Twitter					
Facebook					
Tiktok					
Snapchat					
Reddit					
Other					

20. In the past week, how often have you watched the news on TV
    a. 0 times
    b. 1-2 times
    c. 3-4 times
    d. 5-6 times
    e. 7 or more times
21. What is your primary method of getting the news?
    a. Social media
    b. Watching TV
    c. Reading news articles
    d. Other (please specify)
22. If social media is your primary method of getting the news, which platform or platforms do you use? Check all that apply
    a. Instagram
    b. Twitter
    c. Facebook
    d. TikTok
    e. Snapchat
    f. Reddit
    g. Gab
    h. MeWe
    i. Rumble
    j. Other (please specify)
23. Do you see Black Lives matter content on your social media feeds?
    a. Yes
    b. No

    c. Unsure
24. Is this content pro-Black Lives Matter?
    a. Yes
    b. No
25. If yes, which platforms do you see pro-BLM content on more frequently?
    a. Instagram
    b. Twitter
    c. Facebook
    d. TikTok
    e. Snapchat
    f. Reddit
    g. Gab
    h. MeWe
26. If no, which platforms do you see pro-BLM content on more frequently?
    a. Instagram
    b. Twitter
    c. Facebook
    d. TikTok
    e. Snapchat
    f. Reddit
    g. Gab
    h. MeWe
27. Do you see content related to racial issues on your social media feeds? Examples are housing inequity, racism in the workplace, etc.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure
28. If you answered "unsure" on either or both of the questions above, please elaborate why below.
    a. Type in box
29. Do your friends post content related to Black Lives Matter by sharing others' posts to a feed or story or creating their own content?
    a. Yes
    b. No
30. Do you follow accounts that post about Black Lives Matter?
    a. Yes
    b. No
31. Do you post content related to Black Lives Matter by sharing others' posts to a feed or story or creating your own content?
    a. Yes
    b. No
32. Do you engage with content related to Black Lives Matter by liking, commenting, or sending it to others?
    a. Yes
    b. No

33. Do you post content about race-related issues (i.e. Housing, education, or economic inequality) by sharing others' posts to a feed or story or creating your own content?
    a. Yes
    b. No
34. Do you engage with content about race-related issues (i.e. Housing, education, or economic inequality) by liking, commenting, or sending it to others?
    a. Yes
    b. No
35. Have you done any of the following actions in 2020 or 2021? Check all that apply.
    a. Donated to Black Lives Matter or another organization related to racial inequality
    b. Donated directly to a Black individual
    c. Gone to a Black Lives Matter protest
    d. Read about racial inequality
    e. Watched media about racial inequality
    f. Talked to a family member about Black Lives Matter
    g. Talked to a friend about Black Lives Matter
36. Have you done any of the following actions before 2020? Check all that apply.
    a. Donated to Black Lives Matter or another organization related to racial inequality
    b. Donated directly to a Black individual
    c. Gone to a Black Lives Matter protest
    d. Read about racial inequality
    e. Watched media about racial inequality
    f. Talked to a family member about Black Lives Matter
    g. Talked to a friend about Black Lives Matter
37. If you had the ability to, would you do any of the following actions? Check all that apply.
    a. Donated to Black Lives Matter or another organization related to racial inequality
    b. Donated directly to a Black individual
    c. Gone to a Black Lives Matter protest
    d. Read about racial inequality
    e. Watched media about racial inequality
    f. Talked to a family member about Black Lives Matter
    g. Talked to a friend about Black Lives Matter
38. Given the choice between donating to the Red Cross and donating to Black Lives Matter, which organization would you donate to?[2]
    a. The Red Cross
    b. Black Lives Matter
39. Given the choice between donating to the Red Cross and donating to Blue Lives Matter, which organization would you donate to?[3]
    a. The Red Cross

    b. Blue Lives Matter
40. Given the choice between donating to Blue Lives Matter and donating to Black Lives Matter, which organization would you donate to?[4]
    a. Blue Lives Matter
    b. Black Lives Matter
41. On January 6th, 2021, a mob unlawfully entered the U.S. Capitol building. Do you believe the police responded differently to this group than they did to Black Lives Matter supporters?
    a. Yes
    b. No
42. Is yes, do you believe the police would have been hardersh or Black Lives Matter supporters than they were towards this group?
    a. Yes
    b. No
43. Do you believe police played a role in escalating the events that occurred on January 6th?
    a. Definitely yes
    b. Probably yes
    c. Might or might not
    d. Probably not
    e. Definitely not

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[1] Questions 10-17 of the survey are sourced from Wozniack, Drakulik, and Calfano 2020

[2] This question offers individuals the choice between a nonprofit organization and Black Lives Matter. The Red Cross does not affiliate with political affairs. https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/enterprise-assets/pdfs/m4240154_ethics_rules_and_policies.pdf

[3] This question offers individuals the choice between a nonprofit organization and Black Lives Matter. The Red Cross does not affiliate with political affairs. https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/enterprise-assets/pdfs/m4240154_ethics_rules_and_policies.pdf

[4] This question offers individuals the choice between two movements that are counter in their missions. See Solomon and Martin 2019 to see the dyadic relationship between the two movements.