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## Conference Paper

# To Knee or not to knee: An examination of Twitter visual content during the 2017 NFL national anthem protests in the United States

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**To Knee or not to knee: An examination of Twitter visual content during the  
2017 NFL national anthem protests in the United States**

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## ABSTRACT

In the past few years, the American public has faced many domestic and divisive hardships including, but not limited to, those centered on racial prejudice and police brutality (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2016). In fact, these two issues are what sparked the NFL national anthem protests (NAPs), in which athletes kneel during the national anthem. After President Trump's tweets to openly condemn the NAPs in 2017, public opinions showed polarized responses. In order to analyze the communication patterns and meanings of NAPs visual Tweets, this study is grounded upon the social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and adapts Van Zomeren et al.'s (2012) dynamic dual pathway model (DDPM). This study's proposed research framework allows for greater understanding of how social identity, grievances, and coping approaches (emotional route: affective responses; instrumental route: efficacy) factor into image content shared during a polarized protest. In order to understand social media discussions of NAPs' supporters the NFL, this study conducts visual content analysis of relevant Twitter image tweets after Trump's posts aroused heated debates. This investigation attempts to understand how protest supporters used different digital coping methods in response to protest opposition (such as different affective responses or responses that are efficacy-eliciting).

This study uses images as the primary data source for Twitter content analysis because they have a different intention than text-based social media messages as images present symbols to users, allowing them to establish references quicker. This study collects image tweets using the most viral hashtag #TakeAKnee via the Twitter Advanced Search function from September 24, 2017 (the peak of web search penetration for NAPs) to October 21, 2017 (when the NAPs web search penetration dropped after the second peak). The code scheme includes 4 codes and 18 sub-codes that has been developed based on relevant theoretic concepts about protests. Emerging new codes can be recognized from recurrent patterns that appear during the data analysis. Along with the researcher, another trained coder analyzed the image tweets, resulting in acceptable intercoder reliability.

The findings of this study have shed light on the complex nature of the NFL national anthem protests and the social identity projection for Twitter users who support the NAPs. Specifically, the social identity of minority support was most prevalent while the social identities of constructive patriotism and sports fandoms was minimal, suggesting that although anti-protest mobilizers may be able to increase the volume of online dialogue, they are unable to shift the focus of the protest away from its original purpose. Additionally, reciprocal affective responses (i.e. sympathy and admiration) were expressed more in the image tweets than shared affective responses (i.e. anger and sarcasm), contradicting previous studies on protest emotions and collective action motivators.

Practically, this research is significant because as the NAPs could possibly start anew in the 2018 NFL season, addressing the concerns of the citizens (identified through visual analysis of Twitter images) can be beneficial in resolving the primary issues surrounding the protests. Finally, as few studies have used visual tweet analysis to investigate social movements or protests (see Cowart et. al, 2016; Kharroub & Bas, 2016; Wetzstein, 2017), this study contributes to this emerging form of content analysis.

**Keywords:** *Twitter, content analysis, patriotism, social identity, grievances, group efficacy, group emotion, protest*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research background

A protest is defined as “the collective use of unconventional methods of political participation to try to persuade or coerce authorities to support a challenging group’s aims” (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004, p. 263). It is a fundamental feature that differentiates social movements from routine political actors (such as political parties and interest groups). Protests are implemented by people who lack access to political establishments and other conventional means of influence and they feel that their voices are not being heard (McAdam & Snow, 1997). Most notable offline protests in the United States are marches (e.g., 2004 March for Women’s Lives) and occupations (e.g., 2011 Occupy Wall Street Movement). However, to my knowledge, few studies have investigated contemporary protests engineered by professional celebrity athletes in this country. This research that examines the national anthem protests initiated by some athletes of National Football Association (NFL) is one of the first studies to shed light on how offline protests spread to heated discussions on the Twitter platform, turning into national issues.

The NFL anthem protests (NAPs) is one of the most polarized protests in the United States, which experiences multi-faceted debates encompassing entertainment and politics, military service and race relations, and freedom of speech and patriotism (MacCambridge, 2017). NAPs started in 2016 when Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, kneeled during the playing of the national anthem, “Star Spangled Banner,” in objection to poor race relations. It aroused a selected few supporters during the 2016 NFL season. Then President Barrack Obama also publicly stated that Kaepernick followed his constitutional right to make a statement (Halper, 2016). However, a poll conducted by Reuters in September 2016 found that even though 64% believed that the protesters had a right to voice their grievances under the first amendment, 61% of Americans disagreed with the protest and 72% regarded the protests unpatriotic (Tennery, 2016). Later, these protests that have involved kneeling, sitting, or linking arms during the national anthem, have lasted till the end of the 2017 NFL season.

However, President Trump took a starkly contrasted approach and has repeatedly tweeted through his personal account to openly condemn Kaepernick and his followers who he deemed were unpatriotic and should be fired from the NFL, additionally blaming the NFL for not taking any disciplinary actions (Trump, 2018) (Appendix A shows the list of Trump’s relevant tweets). Then NFL players showed a massive amount of defiance in response to Trump’s condemnations when more than 200 NFL players kneeled during the national anthem on September 24, 2017. Within the first 30 days after Trump tweeted about NAPs, 12% out of his 300 tweets addressed the NFL and respecting the flag or national anthem (Gaines, 2017). The amount of tweets from the American president has showed his emphasis on framing NAPs as the most significant issue and problem that the American public faces during the fall of 2017.

His remarks unexpectedly led to the polarized public views regarding the NAP. According to the Cable News Network’s poll in late September 2017, 49% respondents disapproved of the NFL NAPs (59% identified as white and 87% as Republicans), while 43% approved them (82% identified as black and 72% as Democrats) (Agiesta, 2017). In addition, the respondents showed split views of NAPs’ meanings: 46% said that the protests disrespected the freedom spirit that the flag and the anthem represent, while 45% indicated that the protests demonstrated freedom (Agiesta, 2017). Since this recent poll was conducted by traditional telephone survey, this research which analyzes the image tweets gathered from NAP supporters, provides immediate and direct responses to Trump as he repeatedly used Twitter to voice his opinions against NAPs.

This proposed study aims to understand the communication patterns of the protest supporters after Trump's Twitter campaign, which framed the protesters and those affiliated with the protest as disrespectfully undermining the values of the United States, especially in relation to American iconography (e.g., national flag). The present research draws on the dynamic dual pathway model (DDPM) (Van Zomeren et al., 2004) and the social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to examine how the national anthem protesters and supporters use Twitter to voice their opinions in retaliation to the protest opposition and broken race relations. The SIT is used to see how collective identities are formed and aids in determining what dominant identities are present in the NAPs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Van Zomeren et al., 2012).

Moreover, the DDPM provides a theoretical framework to analyze group based collective action (group identity, unfairness/grievances, anger, social support, and efficacy), specifically identifying two distinct types of coping (emotion-focused and problem-focused). The DDPM has been used in the past to not only understand collective action tendencies in protesters (Kharroub & Bas, 2016; Van Zomeren et al., 2012), but has also been used as the guiding framework to analyze image tweets during a time political protests (Kharroub & Bas, 2016). Thus, the DDPM is a solid model for this study's purposes.

This study used a visual content analysis of image tweets to investigate online communication of NAPs' supporters. Image tweets, defined as "user generated microblog posts that contain an embedded image," (Chen et. al, 2013) was used as the primary data source because they establish references "to injustice that ordinary people can relate to quicker than text" and contain images integral to the social media experiences and (Kharroub & Bas, 2016, p. 1987). Thus, image tweet content analysis was employed to understand how the communication patterns of NAPs' supporters in regard to their identification with the protests, perceived grievances, external blame for those grievances, and efficacy-eliciting strategies. In addition, image tweets were analyzed to understand the affective responses (both reciprocal and shared) to NAPs.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Sport activism and the NFL national anthem protests**

#### **2.1.1 Activism in sports**

Colin Kaepernick and fellow anthem protesters are not the first to protest against social injustice or to use sports as venue to become politicized. During the 1968 Olympics, track and field medalists, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, "stood on the victors' stand at Mexico City, with clenched fists, wearing "black gloves" as a "radical response to American racism" (Spivey, 1983, p. 124). Although this civil rights protest in American athletics were seen as controversial, "radical and undesirable" by sports administrators and the public (Henderson, 2009, p. 104), that has not always been the case. For example, during the same 1968 Summer Olympics in which Tommie Smith and John Carlos protested during the national anthem, South Africa was banned from participating because of their "domestic system of racial apartheid" (Henderson, 2009, p. 104). In fact, this ban can be considered as an "example of athletes successfully bringing the civil rights agenda inside the sporting arena and effecting change" (2009, p. 107).

Sports have a long tradition of providing a space for athletes to voice their disagreement with certain policies, domestic and foreign, as well as commonplace racial prejudices. Muhammad Ali, a heavyweight boxing champion, refused to join the army due to his religious beliefs and strong opposition to the Vietnam War. He was later stripped of his title and sentenced to five years in jail (Warner et al., 2012). Arther Ashe, a professional tennis player from 1969-

1980, was a prominent activist who brought attention to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and was arrested in Washington DC while protesting on multiple occasions (Warner et al., 2012).

### **2.1.2 NFL national anthem protests: Historical background**

The “Star Spangled Banner” was adopted as the official United States anthem in 1936 and began playing before sporting events since 1918 (Selk, 2017). It is commonly seen as a national symbol of the United States and in 2005, a nationwide initiative was launched by the National Association for Music Education (MENC) in order to revive the United States’ patriotism by teaching students the importance of the Star-Spangled Banner and the national flag (Community Service Projects, 2018). Therefore, it is evident the role – and importance of that role – the national anthem plays in American citizens’ lives.

On August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Colin Kaepernick, the quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, caused a widespread uproar when he went against the status quo and sat during the U.S national anthem. National anthems serve as “malleable and dynamic symbols of collective unity of a country” and therefore, citizens are expected to follow certain social norms when the anthem is played (Abril, 2012, p. 5). Acceptable behavior during the anthem, is outlined in the United States Code, 36 U.S.C. § 301, which states that:

When the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand facing the flag with your right hand over your heart. Those present should also remove their hats. Without the presence of the flag, individuals face the source of the music and act in the same manner. (National Anthem, 2008)

Although military law mandates specific mannerisms for active duty soldiers in and out of uniform, civilians are not required to follow the U.S.C. § 301 because it would interfere with their first amendment rights, which protects the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances (U.S. Const. amend. I). Therefore, the national anthem protest is under the protection of U.S Constitution and is by all means legal.

When asked why he began his protest, which changed from sitting during the U.S national anthem on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016, to taking a knee during the anthem on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, Colin Kaepernick stated that:

I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder. (Wyche, 2016)

In this statement, Kaepernick refers to the violence between men of color and the state institutions, primarily the police and those officers who are charged but later acquitted or are only slightly reprimanded by their commanding officers. His protest is in conjunction with the recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, its stance against police brutality, and its goal to “spark dialogue among Black people...and to facilitate the types of connections necessary to encourage social action and engagement” (Cullors et al., 2012). #BlackLivesMatter began in 2013 after George Zimmerman, a white neighborhood watch coordinator, was acquitted for the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old unarmed African American teenager (Cullors, 2012; Barry et. al., 2017).

Similar to the BLM movement, Kaepernick began his protest shortly after Philando Castile, a 32-year-old African American male, was fatally wounded during a traffic stop for a

broken taillight. Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, livestreamed a video of the event through Facebook after the officer had fired his gun at Castile. The graphic video was viewed more than 2.5 million times and was briefly removed from Facebook for an hour due to a "technical glitch," receiving public outrage (Peterson, 2016).

## **2.2. Theoretic foundations**

### **2.2.1. Social identity theory (SIT)**

Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 40) proposed that belonging to groups, which they define as a people who identify as members of the same social category, are emotionally invested in this categorization of themselves, and achieve some level of social consensus about the appraisal of their group and their affiliation to it, provide members of the group with a sense of belonging in society. The social identity theory (SIT) suggests that there are three cognitive processes involved when evaluating others as belonging to the in-group or out-group. According to SIT, in-groups are those in which an individual identifies with. Conversely, an out-group is a group in which they don't identify with. For example, in the socially constructed group of race if one identifies themselves as white, they consider the in-group to inclusive of white people while the out-group is non-whites.

It is this process of categorizing the social spectrum into conceivable and tangible groups (social categorization), assigning and adopting these groups to ourselves (social identification), and comparing these groups (social comparison), that typically lead to intergroup bias and stereotyping (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, during the social comparison process, if the result of said comparison is unsatisfactory, people can either leave their group or find ways to achieve a more "positive distinctiveness" for it (Brown, 2000). Thus, it can be reasonably argued that social identity plays an important part in assessing group disadvantages and can be a motivator for collective action.

A plethora of research has examined the role of social identity in social movement participation, political protesting, and other forms of collective action (Brown, 2000; Saab et al., 2015; Van Zomeren et al., 2012; Wright et al., 1990). For example, in a critical review of SIT, Brown (2000) noted that one of the theory's major contributions is how group identification can sometimes better predict collective protest than relative deprivation. In addition, a line of recent work into the field of SIT research has focused on how identifying with a social movement or other politicized identities can connect individuals to the disadvantaged group, thus creating an obligation to act on its behalf (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Stürmer & Simon, 2004).

These past studies are helpful to this research study as it aids in identifying possible social identities evident in the NAPs and theorizes how they formed. This study specifically places an emphasis on social identity as a primary factor for those who post image tweets, elements from SIT are heavily relied on such as in-group favoritism and bystanders (Saab et al., 2015). In-group favoritism can be exhibited through the support of one's in-group which can lead to changes in individual behavior and actions toward the out-group (i.e. minority members in NAPs emphasizing discriminatory differences; Dasgupta, 2004). Additionally, bystanders (those not belonging to the in-group) can support the disadvantaged group as they can identify with social movement instead (i.e. non-minority members kneeling in NAPs; Saab et al., 2015).

### **2.2.2 Dynamic dual pathway model (DDPM)**

The theoretical framework of this study is primarily adapted from Van Zomeren's et al.'s (2012) DDPM. (see Figure 1). The DDPM is an integrative theory, encompassing elements of

collective actions (e.g., group identity, unfairness (grievances), anger, social support, and efficacy) from a wide array of theories, including SIT.

Although there has been a plethora of research centered on the motivating factors of collective actions, such as the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). However, Van Zomeren et. al (2012) criticized that SIMCA is a descriptive and predictive model derived from a meta-analysis of several studies. They argued that the DDPM is superior model to examine collective actions because it regards collective action as a result of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping approaches from identification to a disadvantaged social group. The former revolves around the experience of group-based anger, while the latter centers on group efficacy.

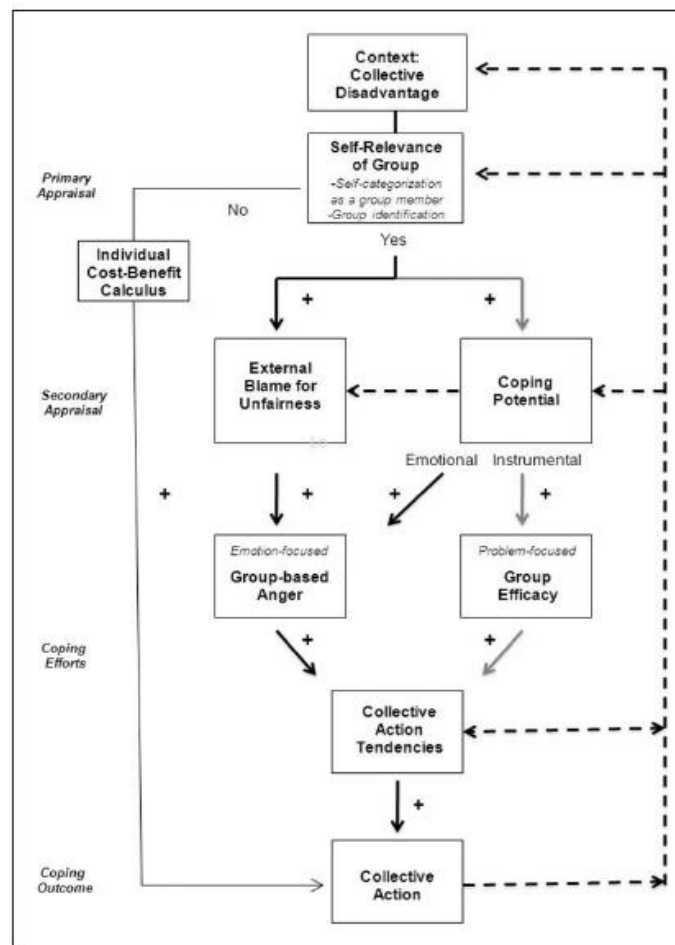


Figure 1. Van Zomeren et. al (2012) dynamic dual pathway model

Instead of viewing identity, emotion, and efficacy as competing explanations of collective action, the DDPM considers these three elements separate but complimentary and considers social identity as a “bridge” between the emotional and efficacy (problem-focused) routes of collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). This is because social identity consolidation both empowers individuals for collective action and magnifies perceptions of unfairness and group-based emotions (illustrated in Figure 1). However, before continuing into



either route to collective action, the individual must first go through the three step process laid out by SIT (categorization, identification, and comparison). If they identify to the social group, then they continue onto either pathway to collective action. Though, if the individual assesses that they don't identify with the social group, then they consider the cost-benefit analysis of engaging in collective action to aid the disadvantaged group.

Additionally, DDPM also theorizes that during and after the development of engaging in collective action (identification to group, assigning external blame for unfairness, and coping – using an emotion focused or instrumental focused approaches), a process of reappraisal occurs. It is this reappraisal of social categorization and identification, collective disadvantages, and the external blames for unfairness (grievances) that fuel the continuance collective actions throughout social movements and protests (see Figure 1; Van Zomeren et al., 2012).

### **2.3. The Proposed Theoretic framework**

As stated previously, this study incorporates social identity from SIT into DDPM, and makes adjustments in the conceptual framework in order to fit the context of twitter analysis of polarized NAPs. The proposed theoretic framework adds both negative and positive emotions for the emotion-focused approach to coping, because collective emotions not only include affective responses harbored toward members of the out-group but also entail on-going feelings about in-group members. Because the aim of this study is to understand how overlapping social identities in American society impacted the 2017 NAPs, emphasis is placed on examining the complex nature of intergroup bias and ingroup favoritism.

Figure 2 shows this study's proposed theoretic framework which incorporates key concepts from the SIT and the DDPM. The key components of the theoretical framework include social identity, grievances, efficacy, and approaches to coping (emotional route: affective responses; instrumental route: efficacy). Some key changes include removing the illustration of the reappraisal process, changing "social categorization" to "social identity," relabeling "external blame for unfairness" to "grievances," and expanding affective emotions. Firstly, although integral to the DDPM, the reappraisal process is not included in the proposed theoretic framework because this study does not focus on the process in which individuals choose to engage in collective action. The study agrees with the DDPM and understands that a reappraisal process occurs and is a driving factor for collective action tendencies, however the sole focus of this specific study is not to predict collective action in the future but to comprehend the communication patterns of those who are already engaging in collective action online. Also, using visual tweet analysis can hardly get the insights of users' reappraisal process. Therefore, the reappraisal process of the DDPM is not included in the proposed theoretical framework.

Secondly, the proposed theoretic framework changes "social comparison" to "social identity." This is because the formation of social identity is a three-step process (social categorization, social identification, and social comparison) and by relabeling "social comparison" to "social identity" this study can avoid the confusion that these two concepts are separate.

Thirdly, this study chooses to use "grievances" instead of "external blame for unfairness." The DDPM proposes that first there is a context of collective disadvantage and then individuals categorize themselves into whether or not they belong to the group that is experiencing this disadvantage. Then the group places the blame on an external agent who they perceive as responsible for their disadvantage. However, as this study revolves around the NAPs, the definition of grievances is a better fit as the term encompasses feelings of unfairness about

the way authority members treat a social or political problem. This is because the NAPs started to highlight police brutality within the United States and authority members such as political figures and leaders in the NFL organization have been blamed for negative and unfair portrayal of those protesting.

Lastly, the emotion-focused route to coping, one major aspect from the DDPM is expanded to include other affective responses aside from anger. This is because although research into anger as a motivating factor for collective action is extensive, research has found that group members additionally feel less agitated emotions when they are unable to find an external blame for their grievances (Walker & Smith, 2002). Moreover, research on solidarity based collective action by members of the advantaged group –those who are not minority, but support with the causes for minority members and engage in collective actions to make changes (i.e., “passionate bystanders:” Saab et al., 2015) has placed more focus onto emotional factors outside of anger (i.e., sympathy and admiration: Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Wright, 2009).

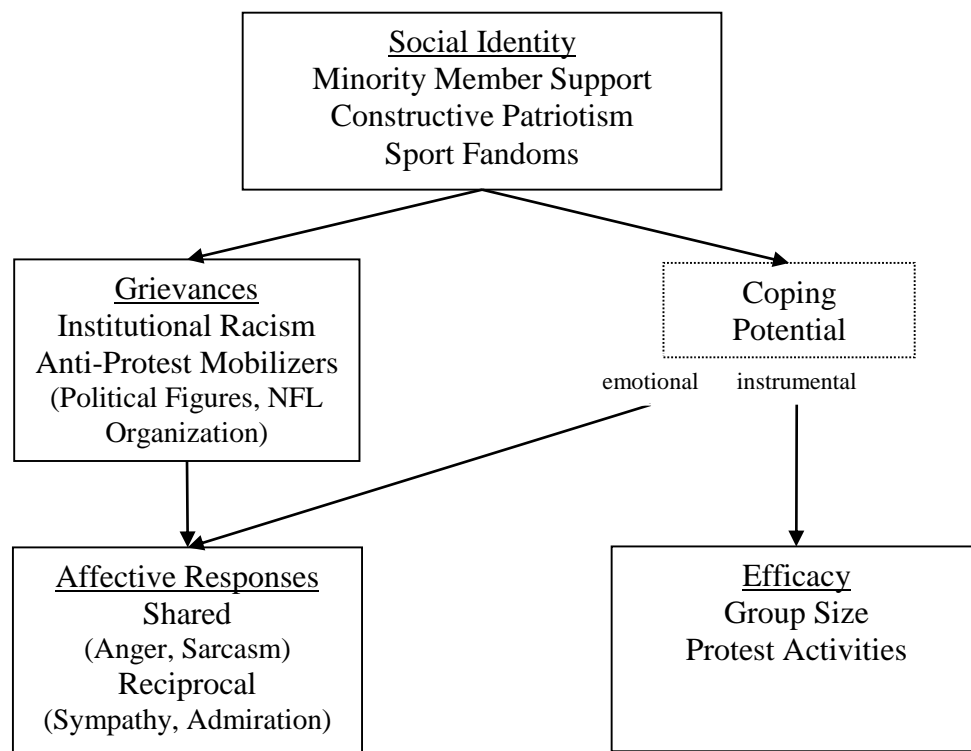


Figure 2. Proposed theoretic framework in this study

In above theoretic framework, social identity includes three concepts for analysis (constructive patriotism, minority allegiance and NFL fandoms). To be noted, minority member support encompasses those that identify themselves as a racial minority and bystanders who are supportive of minority rights. Potential grievances stem from institutional racism and disagreement with anti-protest mobilizers. Anti-protest mobilizers include political figures (i.e. Donald Trump and Mike Pence) and those affiliated with the NFL as an organization (NFL Commissioner, team owners, coaches). Efficacy includes group size and protest activities.

Finally, affective responses include not only negative responses such as anger and sarcasm, but also includes positive emotions specifically, admiration, and sympathy.

This research seeks to understand the how the protest landscape changed over time regarding social identity, grievances, and approaches to coping (emotional route: affective responses; instrumental route: efficacy). Analyzing participating activities related to collective action is out of the scope of this study. The following sections of the literature review will discuss how these elements are identified as key factors shaping collective action of the 2017 NAPs.

### **2.3.1 Social identity**

Social identity is defined as individuals' self-categorization in terms of the social groups they belong to (Chan, 2017). The DDPM proposes that group identity, as one possible explanation to collective action, is theoretically distinct from other explanations, such as perceived grievances, group based emotions, and group efficacy beliefs (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). SIT further posits that people will identify with a low status group to mobilize for collective action in order to achieve social change when instability and illegitimacy suggests that these goals are achievable (Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren et al., 2009; Van Zomeren et al., 2012).

As the NAPs provide a channel for participants to voice their concerns regarding social injustice, it is reasonable that the social identities surrounding the protests have become more salient as the protests continue. Additionally, Stürmer and Simon (2004) suggested in their model of collective action, that politicized group identity is expected to "push" individuals to engage in collective action regardless of how cost-benefit calculations might "pull" them toward collective action. Thus, it is crucial to understand which social identities are most prominent within the NAPs. Due to the nature of the protests – initially centered on racial injustice and continuing to include issues surrounding the First Amendment, all while involving beloved athletes – three dominant social identities surrounding the protest have been identified: identification to and allegiance with minority group members, constructive patriotism, and fandoms and affiliation to the NFL organization, teams, and players.

#### **2.3.1.1 Minority group member support**

Race is without a doubt one of the more basic social identities as it is based on ascribed traits (Jasper, 1998). Recent research has revealed race as a prominent influencer for collective action tendencies (Coward et al., 2016; LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2016). In fact, in their study, LeFebvre and Armstrong (2016) found that a large majority of tweets created during the Ferguson protests were in relation to race. This is most likely because structural discrimination, such as race, are important contextual demands with which people cope (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). Therefore, one explanation for images tweeted in response to the NAPs could be attributed to support of and/or identification to minority groups.

The NAPs, as stated previously, began when Colin Kaepernick sat during the anthem to bring to light unjust behaviors policemen engaged in against minority group members. This is important to note because according to Simon and Klandermans (2001), the collective identity of groups become politicized when people become involved in a political protest on behalf of their group members. Thus a politicized collective identity occurs when the social landscape is cognitively restructured into a categorization of opponents and possible allies; additionally, in order to attract and appeal to potential allies, a strategic restructuring of the conflict issue is

prepared. Thus, dual identities can be formed, which is a simultaneous identification with an in-group and out-group (Klandermans, 2014).

Although the NAPs are not the first case in which the African American identity became politicized, such was the case of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2016, the NAPs became another avenue in which politicized collective identities emerged. One, is that of those who identify with and or are supporters of minority members (i.e. dual identities). Those that possess these dual identities may also be considered passionate bystanders. They are those people who not only understand the injustices felt by minority group members, but they may also engage in collective action along with minority group members to redress those grievances (Saab et al., 2015). In addition, recent research posits that possessing a dual identity may direct people to engage in moderate action (Simon, 2011) which can include taking political action on behalf of disadvantaged groups (Montada & Schneider, 1989) such as posting to social media sites in solidarity. Therefore, support of and/or identification with minority groups is considered one social identity of NAP advocates (i.e. image tweet creators).

### **2.3.1.2 Constructive patriotism**

Negative perceptions of Colin Kaepernick's protest against the national anthem are largely connected to American iconography and U.S symbolic patriotism. Allegiance to the flag and to the national anthem are ingrained in the American public at a young age, continuing into adulthood (Abril, 2012). For example, in some states there are laws that require the presence of the U.S flag in every classroom and in addition, many schools expect children to show reverence for the flag by reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance" and/or by singing the national anthem before school begins. Those that refuse are often considered by some to be un-American, un-patriotic, or communists (Abril, 2012). From the news reports, protests that are in direct opposition of the flag and national anthem are harshly criticized by those who are symbolically patriotic. In fact, SIT posits that national symbols can make collective identities more salient (Kharroub & Bas, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which can make criticisms against the flag and anthem seem like criticisms against group identities that heavily rely on iconography.

However, those who can openly oppose injustice, whether it be government policies or heinous acts committed by authority members in the name of positive social change are considered to be constructly patriotic. This constructive patriotism refers to "an attachment to country characterized by critical loyalty" and "questioning and criticism" driven by "a desire for positive change," (Schatz et al., 1999, p. 153) and is largely a trait belonging to liberal party members. In fact, the symbolic patriotism scale created by American National Election Studies (ANES) considers ideological bias as an important factor in the scale because liberals tend to express reserve about national symbols as a lasting consequence of those who were opposed to the Vietnam War, showing this liberal antiwar sentiment through flag burning. Therefore, conservatives tend to have a higher support for symbolic patriotism than liberals (Conover & Feldman, 1987; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1999; Huddy & Khatib, 2007).

Therefore, it is essential to note that the ideological bias is an important indicator of support for the NAPs. As of the 2016 presidential election, the majority party holder in the United States is the Republican party which tends to uphold conservative values. It explains why President Trump was adamantly opposed to the NAPs and then-President Obama, a member of the Democratic party, was in support.

Additionally, because the freedom of speech, and by association, the freedom to peacefully protest is guaranteed under the United States' First Amendment, those that are

constructively patriotic are more likely to advocate for the NAPs as they are a way for citizens to openly voice their grievances (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). Past studies find that social media plays a positive role in democratic engagement and participation in protest movements (Chen et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017., Tufekci, 2017; Zhu et al., 2017). It is essential to examine how constructive patriotism factors into the social identities of those who tweeted with image content during the NAPs as.

### **2.3.1.3 Sport Fandoms**

Previous research has acknowledged sports as an avenue for individuals to identify with other members of a community (Anderson & Stone, 1981). For example, sports teams, specifically in the U.S use city and state names such as Cincinnati Bengals and the New York Giants to identify with their respected communities. Hunt et al. (1999, p. 440) defined fans as “an enthusiastic devotee of some particular sports consumptive object” and are therefore “consumers of organized sports.” The sports consumptive object can be “sports in general, a specific league, a team, or an object that can refer to a personality such as player, coach/manager, broadcast announcer, or other individual who has a strong association with a team or sport (Hunt et al., 1999, p. 440)

Additionally, fan’s identification with sports and specific players can lead to fan’s identification with the team, ultimately leading to actions such as game attendance, game behavior, and the purchasing of licensed team products (i.e., jerseys, footballs, t-shirts, hats, etc.) (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Take the first national anthem protester, Colin Kaepernick, for example. In September 2016, Forbes reported that Kaepernick, despite being a second string quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, had the top jersey sales in the NFL (Heitner, 2016). High identification with the team player and his stance toward the U.S flag and national anthem is a possible explanation of the rise in jersey sales. The jersey with Kaepernick’s name and number was not just associated with his football statistical record or affiliation with the San Francisco 49ers, but it also represented being a part of the growing social movement that Kaepernick initiated (Heitner, 2016).

The NAPs provides an interesting scope on collective identity because the nature of the protest itself takes place directly before the sporting event and has appeared not only in the NFL but in collegiate games and broadly on social media (Belson, 2017). Therefore, football fans are faced with the social identity dilemma of who and what to support based on their identification with their sport consumptive object and their own identification with symbolic representations of U.S patriotism.

Heere and James (2007) argued that sports teams not only provide a valuable source for group identity, but also a symbolic representation of social and community life. This is because sports teams not only represent the owners, coaches, and players, but also the city or state in which they are located, the university in which they are affiliated, and other groups, such as those belonging to: demographic categories (geographic, race, gender, social class) and membership organizations (university, corporate, religious, political) (Deaux et. al, 1995; Heere & James, 2007). Therefore, strong affiliation with the participating players and teams, as well as the NFL as an organization, could potentially lead to support for the NAPs and other protests within the context of sport.

It is important to note that online media was found to have the greatest effect on the association between fan identification and collective self- esteem (Phua, 2010), are venues in which fans selectively self-present (Walther, 1996), and provide sports fans with a way to

collectively manage their social identity crises (Sanderson, 2013). For example, Sanderson (2013) found that when the head coach for the University of Cincinnati's football team left to coach at a rival university, social media enabled fans to send messages which elevated group distinctiveness, minimized in-group issues, and devalued out group members.

Social media acts a tool in which not only members of sports fandoms, but also supporters of minority members and constructive patriots can come together to have a conversation about the NAPs in the digital realm. Understanding the role social media plays is important because it is then when one can successfully analyze the narrative created online, which can reflect the offline protest communication patterns.

### **2.3.2 Grievances**

Grievances can be defined as “a sense of indignation about the way authorities are treating a social or political problem” and act as main motivators for political participation (Klandermans, 1997; Klandermans et al., 2008, p.993). Previous research has shown that when citizens feel other groups have an unjust advantage, their propensity to see and use protest as an appropriate response increases. However, those who do not belong to the disadvantage group, yet share in the moral outrage with social injustice, thus uniting them, and normatively prescribe actions aimed at redressing injustice, are bystanders (Saab et al., 2015). In the context of the NAPs, racial prejudice, particularly police brutality was a major motivator for starting the protests in 2016 and continuing them in 2017.

Protest behavior becomes more attractive when grievances are directly accredited to structural out-groups such as political leaders, law enforcement, or other institutional organizations, as institutional attribution becomes gradually pronounced and more normative modes of collective action are alleged as lacking efficacy (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Smyth, 2002). Such is the case in the NAPs. With the Trump's increase in tweets against the protest and the underlying reasons behind them as well as other political figures and those affiliated with the NFL organization racing to choose sides public grievances have become clearer. Therefore, this study considers institutional racism, specifically police brutality, and anti-protest mobilizers as the initial primary public grievances.

#### **2.3.2.1 Institutional racism**

Although slavery has been abolished in the United States ever since the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1865, it can be easily argued that racial prejudice has evolved over the years and even now institutional racism is still prevalent in social institutions across America. Institutional racism is defined as “racial discrimination that has become established as normal behavior within a society or organization” such as governmental organizations, schools, banks, and courts of law (Definition of institutional racism, 2018). One famous example of this is the barring of African Americans from attending certain public schools which was allowed under the “separate but equal” doctrine established by the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).

During their analysis of Twitter mobilizers during the Ferguson Twitter storm, LeFebvre and Armstrong (2016) found that 40% of tweets mentioned grievances around police conduct, race relations, and the justice system. They found that the digital dialog of the protests and social movement “reflected expectations about likely drivers of traditional grievances” (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2016, p. 16). Additionally, previous research has found that strong predictors of

protest participation are the level fairness and procedural integrity in relative and relational aspects of the social process (Morrison, 1971; Tyler & Smith, 1995).

Colin Kaepernick, the first athlete to partake in the NAPs did so because he felt that institutional racism, specifically police brutality in the US affecting minority members was gaining too much traction. Mapping Police Violence, a research collaborative that collects comprehensive data on police killings nationwide using information compiled by media reports, obituaries, public records, and databased such as Fatal Encounters and the Washington Post released an analysis on police violence for 2017.

In this analysis, more than 1,100 people were killed by the police and of those people 25% were black people and the majority of unarmed people killed were people of color (2017 Police Violence Report, 2018) despite being on 13% of the population (U.S Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2018). In addition, as of 2017, only 4 states require police to use other means to reprimand suspects and criminals before using deadly force and it was also found that police recruits spend seven times as many hours training to shoot than they do training to de-escalate situations (2017 Police Violence Report, 2018). Based on previous research and the initial reasoning behind the NAPs, institutional racism will be operationalized as images and videos containing imagery of police violence as well as imagery that depicts other social organizations having racial prejudices.

### **2.3.2.2 Anti – protest mobilizers**

As stated previously, the NAPs are a highly polarized issue, with 43% approving of the protests and 49% in opposition (Agiesta, 2017). Due to this polarization, those that mobilize the anti-protests or anti-movements and continue the dialogue that targets supporters or the NAPs as a whole are referred to as anti-protest mobilizers. In a recent study involving the analysis of hashtags during the Ferguson protests, the online dialogue was driven to a huge volume (1.5 million participants) by protest mobilizers (LeFebvre & Armstrong 2016). Therefore, it is essential to understand the key mobilizers of the opposition as they might have fueled the posting of image tweets online in retaliation of online and offline remarks regarding the NAPs.

Before outlining the NFL national anthem anti-protest mobilizers, it is crucial to define what a counter movement is. Mottl (1980, p. 620) defined counter movements as “a conscious, collective, organized attempt to resist or to reverse social change.” Counter movements thus challenge opposition from lower ranks of the social hierarchy and revolve around a “single idea as an ideological lever for the mobilization of disparate constituents to preserve the status quo” (Mottl, 1980, p. 622). The ideological lever in this case is the questionable patriotism, and by association, respect of veterans, of protest supporters.

Counter movement leaders, as defined by Mottl (1980, p. 626), are typically “elites within existing institutions who strongly oppose change; they also perceive their power as threatened by change or as augmented by their resistance to change.” To encompass anti-protest mobilizers, who may not be considered elites, this paper additionally adopts Sutherland et. al (2013) definition of leadership. Thus, this paper defines anti-mobilizers not only as those that are threatened by change but are also those that possess leadership that is iterative and who define meaning in a movement (Mottl, 1980; Sutherland et al., 2013). In this context, anti-mobilizers are those who are in opposition to the NFL protests. Three types of anti-protest mobilizers (political figures and the NFL organization) have been identified and during preliminary analysis, each of these mobilizers have taken ideological level and used it to oppose the supporters of the protest.

### *Political figures*

As discussed earlier in this paper, President Donald Trump has been one of the leading advocates for ending the NAPs. Of the 31 tweets that were successfully retrieved from Trump's Twitter feed, 21 either directly accused the NAPs as being disrespectful or demanded that the flag and national anthem be respected (Donald J. Trump, 2018; see Appendix A). In a political rally in Alabama on September 22, 2017, Trump posed this hypothetical question: "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out. He's fired. He's fired'" (Gottlieb & Maske, 2017). As the head of state and the Commander-in-chief of the United States of America's armed forces, it is evident which side of the protest he stands on and how he wants the protest and protesters to be handled. Therefore, Trump serves as a prime example of a political figure anti-protest mobilizer.

Although Trump is one of the major anti-protest mobilizer, this study anticipates that he is not the only political figure that will appear as sources of grievances in the image tweets. In fact, because Trump is the leader of the Republican party, it is possible that other members of the political party will appear during analysis as well. Therefore, 'political figures' is used to encompass other politically motivated anti-protest mobilizers.

### *NFL organization*

As the participants of the NAPs are primarily professional football players and fans of NFL teams, the NFL as an organization and how those belonging to the organization have responded to the protest can serve as anti-protest mobilizers. For example, Commissioner of the National Football League Roger Goodell who previously stated that players have a right to voice their opinions changed his stance on October 10, 2017 (Belson, 2017). Goodell sent a letter to all of the team owners stating, that "the controversy over the anthem is a barrier to having honest conversations and making real progress on the underlying issue, and therefore "like many of our fans, we believe that everyone should stand for the national anthem" (Belson, 2017).

In addition, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones not only stated in an interview that "if we are disrespecting the flag, then we won't play. Period" (Belson, 2017). However, Jones and Goodell are not the only ones opposed to the anthem protests. Bob McNair, owner of the Houston Texans, stated during an NFL meeting between owners and players that "we can't have inmates running the prison," referencing the protesters, receiving significant backlash from the sport community (Gartland, 2017). Likewise, nine team owners were in favor of passing a mandate that would require players to stand during the playing of the national anthem (Gartland, 2017). As of right now, because the NFL teams are private businesses, they can limit what employees say and do while working (Belson, 2017). If a mandate were to pass, the NFL players union said they would file a lawsuit against the NFL.

Although it is unclear what the motivations behind the NFL organization owners' or team owners' decision to condemn the anthem protest, be it financial or respecting the flag, anthem, or military, due to the backlash those associated with the NFL organization have received they will be considered as anti-protest mobilizers.

### **2.3.3 Coping**

As stated by Van Zomeren et al. (2012), the DDPM assumes that the collective disadvantage results in a demand for individual or group coping efforts. Collective action that is designed to alter group circumstances is referred to approach coping (Van Zomeren et al., 2012).



The DDPM proposes that there are two types of approach coping: the emotional route and the instrumental route (see figure 1; Van Zomeren et al., 2012).

The emotional route to approach coping includes emotional support through affective responses. For example, protest emotions can be validated through the sharing ones' appraisal for blame of group disadvantages and shared emotional responses with likeminded others (Peters & Kashima, 2007; Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren et al., 2012). The instrumental route to approach coping, which includes efficacy, aims at altering collective disadvantage (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). In fact, other's willingness to engage in protest activities in order to change the group disadvantage can lead to higher group efficacy beliefs (Klandermans, 1997). Thus, understanding the various types of affective responses and efficacy will aid in providing insight into how protest supporters coped with the opposition to the NAPs.

### **2.3.3.1 Emotional route: affective responses**

Other than shared grievances, previous research has also found that emotions within a protest can additionally be possible motivators for engaging in protests and other forms of collective action (Carver & Harmon – Jones, 2009; Goodwin et al., 2000; Jasper 1998; Jasper, 2011; Sweetman et al., 2013; Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren et al., 2012). Previous research has also shown that placing a focus on group based emotions is an effective way of discerning and predicting diverse strategies for collective action (Iyer et al., 2007). Therefore, valuable insight into understanding collective action can be gained by examining the affective responses that are derived from grievances (Thomas et al., 2009).

Jasper et al. (1998) identified two types of protest emotions: reciprocal and shared. While reciprocal emotions refer to participants' on-going feelings toward each other, such as solidarity and loyalty, and the specific emotions they elicit, shared emotions are those held by the group participants at the same time. Shared emotions can include anger towards out-group members or outrage against the government over specific policies. Reciprocal and shared emotions reinforce each other and thereby build a movements culture. For example, the reciprocal emotion of admiration can be reinforced through a shared outrage against an injustice precisely because other participants in the social movement or protest feel the same way (Goodwin et al., 2000).

Although participants can experience a multitude of emotions in every phase and aspect of a protest (Jasper, 2011), during preliminary analysis of retrieved image tweets, four dominant affective responses have been identified – anger, sarcasm, admiration, and sympathy. The study of *anger* as a motivator for collective action is quite extensive (see Carver & Harmon – Jones, 2009). It should be noted that when group members fail to blame an external agent for their grievances, they are likely to feel less agitated emotions (Walker & Smith, 2002). However, these types of less action oriented negative affective responses, whether reciprocal or shared, should not be overlooked simply because they might not be accountable for leading to collective action. In fact, due to the rising popularity of research on solidarity- based collective action by members of the advantaged group, there has been further investigation into the study of emotional antecedents other than anger, such as sympathy and admiration (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Wright, 2009). In order to fully comprehend the gravity of the NAPs, and similar polarized protests, it is crucial to see what type of affective responses the public is feeling and when and how they are emitting those feelings.

The definitions of the affective responses (anger, sarcasm, admiration, and sympathy) adopted for this study, as well as the operational definitions used for analysis are mentioned below:

### 2.3.3.1.1 Shared affective responses

*Anger*: defined as a strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism aroused by a sense of injury or wrong (Fitzgibbons, 1986). Anger as an amplifier of collective action tendencies has been extensively researched (Carver & Harmon - Jones, 2009; Jasper et al., 1998; Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren et al., 2012). Because the NAPs are centered around perceived social injustice and also because anti-protest mobilizers have publicly denounced the protests, anger might play a large role in images tweeted in retaliation.

*Sarcasm*: is defined as conflict between the context and the intended meaning of a statement and sarcastic tendencies stem from the feelings of annoyance or irritability (Abrams & Harpham, 2009). Sarcasm is important in regard to affective responses for shared social identities and grievances because it can be used as a means of expressing subversive political communication in an indirect way (Clothey et al., 2014). In addition, studies showed that the viewing of sarcastic political humor can foster individual's participation in politics (Lee & Kwok, 2014) thus supporting the notion that emotion-focused and instrumental-focused approaches to coping are complementary (Van Zomeren et al., 2012).

### 2.3.3.1.2 Reciprocal affective responses:

*Sympathy*: is defined as a response to a disadvantaged outgroup's suffering which involves feeling compassion for them (Saab et al., 2015). Previous research has shown sympathy to be a positive predictor of collective action (targeting offenders' and easing suffering of the outgroup) (Feather et al., 2012; Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Saab et al., 2015; Thomas, 2005).

*Admiration*: is defined as an emotion we are likely to feel towards those who engage in praiseworthy actions (Collins et al., 1988). Previous research has found that willingness to take political action against the outgroup decreases when admiration for the outgroup increases (Sweetman et al., 2013). Additionally, admiration positively predicts political action tendencies and behavior aimed at challenging the status quo when the object of said admiration is depicted as a martyr (Sweetman et al., 2013). Interestingly enough, although Kaepernick was not physically harmed during the NAPs, his career was and therefore he might be depicted as a martyr, thus increasing the public's admiration for him.

### **2.3.3.2 Instrumental route: efficacy**

Efficacy, or "one's collective belief that group-related problems can be solved by collective effort" (Van Zomeren et al, 2004), has been viewed in previous research as a motivator of collective action for rectifying perceived injustices (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1997). As stated previously, the DDPM poses that there are two distinct pathways to collective action, emotion-focused and problem-focused. Efficacy is proposed as an important form of problem-focused coping and "complements the emotion-focused form of approach coping represented by anger" (Van Zomeren et al. 2012, p. 182). In addition, in their meta-analysis, Van Zomeren et al., (2008) found that efficacy is a positive and unique predictor of non-violent collective action. Because the NAPs are relatively peaceful, with the exception of when members of the opposition set fire to Kaepernick's jersey earlier on in the first season of the protests (Boren, 2016), efficacy-eliciting content shared through images on Twitter may have had an impact on others posting and engaging with similar content.

Given the importance efficacy-eliciting content in motivating political and social activism, this study examines the image tweets shared during the NAPs. Two potential types of image content that have been found to increase efficacy are group size and protest activities

(Kharroub & Bas, 2016). This study adopts Kharroub and Bas' (2016) definition for group size – the expectation about the number of participants in collective action - and expands it to include the size of protest activities. This is because the expectation of the number of participants in collective action (Klandermans, 1984) and by association, the scale of the protest activities, are some of the most important factors in participants' willingness to engage in protests.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer these research questions, this study employed a visual content analysis for image tweets retrieved from Twitter. And thus, proposes the following research questions:

- RQ1: What kinds of social identities are shown in the image tweets posted by protest supporters during the NFL national anthem protests?
- RQ2: What are the key visual themes for image tweets featuring grievances (i.e. institutional racism and anti-protest mobilizers) during the 2017 NFL national anthem protests?
- RQ3: What are the key themes in image tweets in terms of emotionally-arousing responses (i.e., anger, sympathy, admiration, and sarcasm) during the 2017 NFL national anthem protests?
- RQ4: What are the key visual themes in image tweets terms of efficacy-eliciting responses (i.e., protest size, protest activities) in the image tweets during the 2017 NFL national anthem protests?

According to Babbie (2016), content analysis is “the study of recorded human communication, such as books, websites, paintings, and laws (p. 323). Another definition states that “content analysis is an empirical... and objective procedure for quantifying recorded ‘audio-visual’... representation using reliable, explicitly defined categories” (Leeuwen & Jewitt 2013, p. 13). This study specifically used visual content analysis which “allows [for the] quantification of samples of observable content classified into distinct categories” (Leeuwen & Jewitt 2013, p. 14). This study used images as the primary data source for Twitter content analysis and excluded other forms of visual content such as videos and moving images because “they would need an analysis approach beyond still images due to the manifold modes to be considered additional to the (written) verbal and visual mode (especially movement, sound, and speech)” (Wetzstein, 2017, p. 28).

Although visual analysis is reasonably more time consuming than analyses involving simple texts, visual analysis of Twitter content provides an important contribution to social media research. Image tweets are now integral to the social media experience, becoming a staple of user-generated content (Chen et. al, 2013), and “this shift towards visuals arguably transforms how we relate to each other and the world around us, as well as how we perceive and construct our sense of self” (Russmann & Svensson, 2017, p.1). In addition, social media images have a different intention than text-based social media messages as images present symbols to users, allowing them to establish references quicker. For example, people can reference the issue of injustice via an image faster than they can through text (Kharroub & Bas, 2016). Image tweets have also been found to be retweeted more often and to have survived longer than text-only posts (Zhao et. al, 2012).

As discussed previously in this paper, visual analysis is an emerging form of research methodology and few scholars have used this method for studies involving social media sites, especially Twitter (see Sarcevic et. al 2012). Even fewer studies have used visual analysis to

deconstruct social movements during times of social unrest (see Kharroub & Bas, 2016; Cowar et. al, 2016; Wetzstein, 2017). However, because people tend to prefer content that is simple, easy to digest, and elicits emotion (Belicove, 2011; Goldstein, 2009; Rose, 2012), analysis of visual communication is crucial. Such is the case with the 2017 NAPs. By analyzing image tweets during the protest period, it is possible to have a deeper understanding of the social identities, grievances, efficacy, and emotions of those who are supportive of the protest efforts after President Donald Trump personally condemned the protests for being disrespectful and unpatriotic, especially during peak events determined by Google Trend data and newspaper headlines.

### **3.1 Data sampling and collection: Trends from the 2017 protests**

This study utilized Google Trend data to determine specifically when image tweet collection should begin as well as the duration of data collection (see figure 3). Based on Google Trend data, this study collected image tweets using the most viral #TakeAKnee hashtag via the Twitter Advanced Search function from September 24, 2017 (the peak of web search penetration for NAPs) to October 21, 2017 (when the NAPs web search penetration dropped after the second peak).

This study specifically used the hashtag #TakeAKnee for three reasons. The first was that in relation to other identified hashtags, #TakeAKnee was reported to have most mentions (2.4 million) around September 24, 2017. Secondly, while referencing the hashtag the CEO Todd Walker of Talkwalker, social media analytics and monitoring platform, said that usage of the hashtag was just the beginning and it will continue to trend into the future (Monllos, 2017). Lastly, when compared to the other hashtags, #TakeAKnee had more search interest penetration according to Google Trend data.

Due to the sheer quantity of tweets, only 50 image tweets were collected from each day of the specified time period, totaling 1,400. Image tweets that served as marketing tools or teasers and were linked to external websites such as journalistic articles within news media organizations are excluded from analysis. This was because visual logics of traditional news media outlets tend to provide a different way of storytelling and different perspectives on protests than the visual discourse taking place directly on Twitter (Wetzstein, 2017). For example, orientation which researchers have identified in mainstream news media's conflict coverage (Ottosen, 2017; Wetzstein, 2011). In addition, repeatedly occurring image tweets was collected and analyzed once each day. Repeatedly occurring image tweets were defined as (1) taking the same graphic viewpoint and (2) portraying the same actors (same individuals or the same actor group, such as a group of protestors) (Wetzstein, 2017).

### **3.2 Data analysis**

This study employed visual content analysis. All approaches to qualitative content analysis require a similar analytical process of seven classic steps, including 1) formulating research questions, 2) sample selection, 3) defining the code categories, 4) outlining the coding process and the intercoder training, 5) applying the coding process, 6) determining coder trustworthiness, and 7) analyzing the results coding results (Kaid, 1989). To develop the code scheme, this study applied a visual content analysis, combining both deductive and inductive approach to coding (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Thus, the code scheme had a balance of codes derived from existing framework and emerging codes from data analysis. However, if insight from the image tweets could not be gathered from the image alone, the text accompanying the

image was additionally analyzed for contextual purposes. If the context could not be ascertained from both the image and text, then the image tweet was not included in the final analysis.

The deductive coding was adapted from the theoretical framework, a combination of the Van Zomeren et al. (2012) dynamic dual pathway model and Tajfel and Turner (1979) social identity theory. Based on the existing framework, four motivators to engage in collective action were identified: social identity, grievances, affective responses, and efficacy. From a review of past studies and literature regarding these codes, three codes for social identity (minority member support, constructive patriotism, and sport fandoms), two codes for grievances (institutional racism and anti-protest mobilizers), four codes for affective responses (anger, sarcasm, sympathy, and admiration), and three codes for efficacy (group size, protest activities, and social change) have been identified in the preliminary round of analysis. In addition, emerging codes are identified through the inductive approach during analysis (i.e., protest avatars, humor, solidarity, and organization of protests).

### **3.2.1 Coding instrument**

Appendix A includes examples of the types of pictures that were retrieved from Twitter and how they were categorized into the different concepts within this study's proposed theoretic framework. Not only the image tweet, but the accompanying Twitter text was also retrieved. This was because if context could not be gathered from the picture alone, the text then was used to provide further insight. The overarching concepts from the proposed theoretical framework and initial sub-codes that have been identified through an extant review of previous literature and research are included (see Appendix A).

### **3.2.2 Intercode Reliability**

It is essential to have a measurement of reliability for this research. Therefore, along with the researcher, another coder was recruited and trained. Coders was assigned to code the data based on the coding scheme and compare their results in terms of intercode reliability. Data were manually coded using the seven steps of qualitative content analysis.

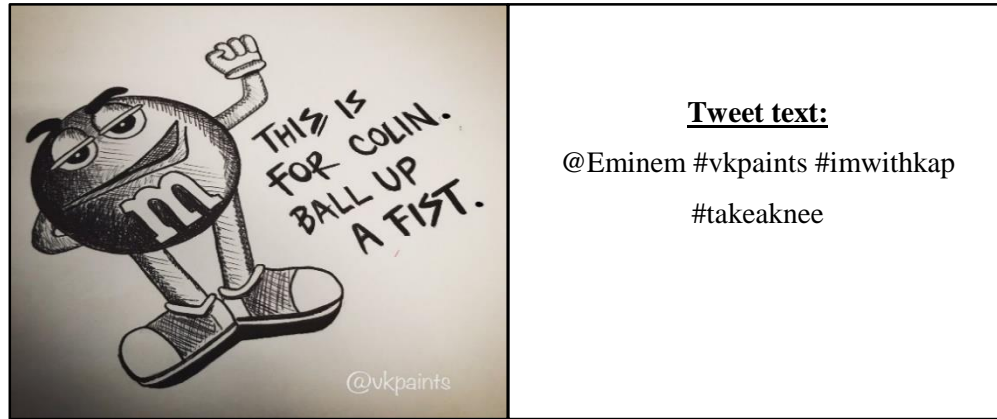
A Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) was used to gauge the level of reliability (Burla, et al., 2008; Lombard et al., 2002). Cohen's Kappa coefficient is a 'concordant rating' in which agreements are split in -1 and +1. Once Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) has been calculated, the value needs to be calculated. Kappa values above .80 are considered the best agreements possible, while above .60 is an adequate, but solid agreement, but a value between .41 and .60 is considered moderate, but not ideal. (McHugh, 2012). During the intercode pretest, 50 images were coded by the two coders. Intercode reliability was established where the Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) was 0.83. Moreover, post-test reliability using 50 different images was achieved with Cohen's Kappa ( $\kappa$ ) being 0.87.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Social Identity**

In response to RQ1, minority support was the dominant social identity found in the image tweets containing a pronounced social identity ( $n = 663$ ; 47.36%) (see Table 1). Additionally, the most prominent theme within image tweets that contained minority support was people of color engaging in protest activities ( $n = 310$ ; 22.14%). Surprisingly, constructive patriotism was only found within 8.79% ( $n = 123$ ) of image tweets and sports fandoms was only found in 1.21% ( $n = 17$ ) of the image tweets. Within the sub code of constructive patriotism, instead of images that showed support for the first amendment ( $n = 36$ , 2.57%), images that voiced identification with

the military and supported the NAPs was more prevalent ( $n = 87, 6.21$ ). Additionally, image tweets that expressed the sports fandom included more images of sport team, their logos and mascots ( $n = 11, .43\%$ ) than of people wearing team merchandise ( $n = 6, .79\%$ ).



*Figure 3.* A drawing of one of the mascots for M&M candies engaging in NAP protest activities (raised fist). Text of image and tweet indicate support for Colin Kaepernick and NAP protests.

One emerging code within the image tweet data is “protest avatars” ( $n = 64, 4.57\%$ ), which included various images of fictional characters, such as superheroes or characters found in television ads and shows, and non-human characters, such as cats and dogs, engaging in protest activities (i.e., kneeling, raising a fist). Protest avatars in this sense did not act as images associated with individual profile pictures, but were those images tweeted out to the public. Such images were accompanied by the protest hashtag and therefore showed support of the NAPs. Figure 3 is one example of this and depicts a famous M&M television ad character raising a fist in support of the NAPs.

Table 1  
*Frequency and Percentage of Social Identity Image Tweets*

Code	Code Frequency	Code Percentage
<b>Minority Support</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>47.36%</b>
People of color engaging in protest activities	311	22.14%
Non-people of color engaging in protest activities	70	5%
People of color and & non- people of color in protest activities	116	8.28%
Portraits of people of color	166	11.86%
<b>Constructive Patriotism</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>8.79%</b>
Support of First Amendment	36	2.57%
Military member	87	6.21%
<b>Sports Fandoms</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.21%</b>
Wearing sports team merchandise	6	0.43%
Display of sports teams, their logos, and mascots etc.	11	0.79%
<b>*Protest Avatars</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>4.57%</b>

\* emerging codes

## 4.2 Grievances

In response to RQ2, police brutality as a type of institutional racism accounted for only 1.79% (n = 25) of image tweets, while political figures as anti-protest mobilizers were present in 17.14% (n = 240) of the image tweets and the NFL organization as anti-protest mobilizers was depicted in 1.21% (n = 17) of the image tweets (see Table 2). As expected, President Donald Trump was the most dominant political figure pictured (202 = 14.43%), followed by Vice President Mike Pence and other political figures (n = 28, 2%). Additionally, there were 10 pictures that included both Donald Trump and other political figures (0.71%).

Table 2  
*Frequency and Percentage of Grievances Image Tweets*

Code	Code Frequency	Code Percentage
<b>Institutional Racism:</b>		
<i>Police Brutality</i>	<b>25</b>	<b>1.79%</b>
Beating/tackling	16	1.14%
Shooting	9	0.64%
<b>Anti- Protest Mobilizers:</b>		
<i>Political Figures</i>	<b>240</b>	<b>17.14%</b>
Donald Trump	202	14.43%
Other political figures	28	2%
Donald Trump and Other political figures	10	0.71%
<b>Anti- Protest Mobilizers: NFL Organization</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1.21%</b>
NFL logos or products	7	0.5%
NFL coaches, board members, commissioner	10	0.71%

\* emerging codes

In the 202 image tweets that included Donald Trump, 100 of those images also included some types of anger: profane language (22%), violence or degrading actions towards opposition (69%), and anger expressions (9%). Additionally, images may also have been coded with one or more affective response and typically included anger and the emerging code of humor. This type of image most often expresses anger by violently hurting Donald Trump and by acting out a play on words associated with the NAPs. This is done to invoke a sense of superiority and will be elaborated more in the following section. Figure 4 is an example of this image tweet combination, including the most common type of anger. The humorous aspect of this picture will always be debatable as humor is subjective, but one can argue that Donald Trump taking a knee to the groin with the caption “Take A Knee” is the intended witticism.





*Figure 4.* The image is a cartoon image depicting an enlarged NFL football player kneeling Donald Trump in his groin. The image and tweet text indicate support of the NAPs and anger toward Trump although the tweet text mentions both Mike Pence and Donald Trump.

#### 4.3 Coping: emotional route

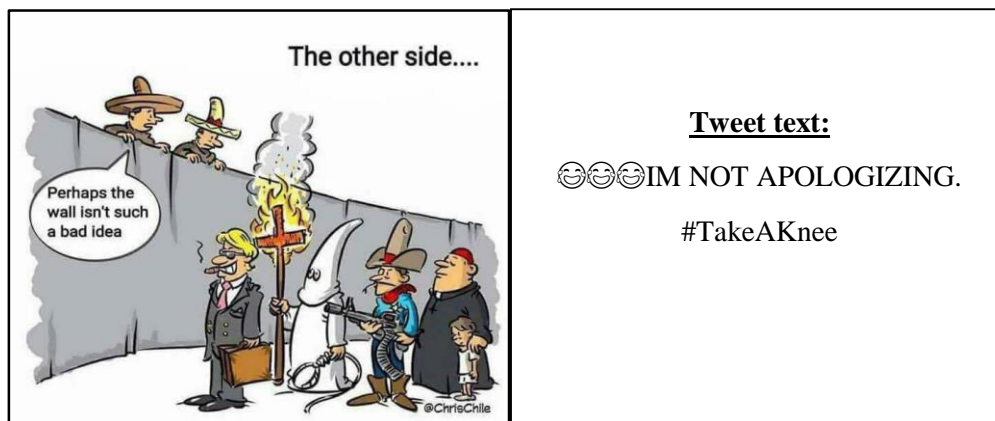
In regard to RQ3, anger was the most dominant shared affective response with 16.71% ( $n = 234$ ), while sarcasm as a shared affective response only accounted for 7.21% ( $n = 101$ ) of image tweets (see Table 3). For reciprocal affective responses, admiration was expressed the most with 31.71% ( $N = 444$ ) and sympathy was shown in 20.57% of the image tweets ( $n = 274$ ) (see Table 4). 18.56% of image tweets that included admiration were those directed toward those engaging in protest activities associated with the NAPs. This type of image tweet has used members of family as well as strangers a focal point of praise. Concerning image tweets that referenced sympathy, more than half of them were those of white people engaging in protest activities ( $n = 186$ , 13.29%).

Table 3  
*Frequency and Percentage of Shared Affective Responses Image Tweets*

Code	Code Frequency	Code Percentage
<b>Anger</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>16.71%</b>
Profane language	37	2.64%
Violence or degrading actions towards opposition	96	6.86%
Anger expressions (scowl, smoke out of ears, etc.)	3	0.21%
Anger toward status quo	98	7%
<b>Sarcasm</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>7.21%</b>
Using flag as decoration	36	2.57%
Insulting NAP supporters to show idiocy of opposition	62	4.43%
Other	3	0.21%
<b>*Humor</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>4%</b>

\* emerging codes

Two emerging codes were identified in the data, humor and solidarity. Humor was included in the shared affective response code scheme as the images were those that tried to assert superiority over out-group members through mocking and ridiculing behaviors (n = 56, 4%). Image tweets that were coded with humor were often political cartoons and memes. Figure 5 is one example of a political cartoon. It mocks not only the newest proposed border wall decision by President Trump between Mexico and the United States, but it also indicates four negative stereotypical character images found within U.S society.



*Figure 5.* Four figures (Donal Trump, a hooded Ku Klux Klan member, a man with a machine gun wearing a cowboy hat, and a priest with young boy) are standing in front of a cement wall while two men wearing sombreros are looking down on them from up-high. The image and tweet text indicate support for the NAP paired with laughing emoticons, indicating humor.



*Figure 6.* An African American woman wearing an NAP t-shirt. T-shirt image is of Colin Kaepernick kneeling on Donald Trump's month with the caption "JUSTICE FOR ALL." Tweet image and text indicate support for NAPs.

The second emerging code, solidarity, was expressed in 6.21% of the image tweets ( $n = 87$ ). As this study adapts Goodwin et al. (2000)'s definition of solidarity, referring to this reciprocal affective emotion as not only positive feelings toward members of the in-group, including emotions that foster kinship (such as trust, loyalty, and affection), image tweets that were coded as solidarity needed to additionally show a voiced interest to participate in collective action. However, images that only show support of the NAPs by any means other than engaging in protest activities were considered as a part of the emerging code of solidarity. This is to account for images in which clear support for the NAPs was shown but could not be placed under initial codes in order to keep operational definitions as well as the coding process clear and concise. A common type of solidarity found within the data set included images of people

wearing t-shirts with words, actions, or symbols associated with the NAPs. For reference, see Figure 6.

Table 4  
*Frequency and Percentage of Reciprocal Affective Responses Image Tweets*

Code	Code Frequency	Code Percentage
<b>Sympathy</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>20.57%</b>
Painful expressions of people of color	29	2.07%
Murder victims or calls to end unjustified killings	89	6.36
White people engaging in protest activities	186	13.29%
Other	6	0.43%
<b>Admiration</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>31.71%</b>
Supporters of NAPs being recognized	121	8.64%
Those engaging in protest activities being recognized	264	18.56%
Historical figures involved in social movements or social justice (i.e., Martin Luther King Jr.)	59	4.21%
<b>*Solidarity</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>6.21%</b>

\*emerging codes

#### 4.4 Coping: Instrumental Route - Efficacy

In response to RQ4, protest activities were the most dominant types of efficacy (n = 609, 43.5%) and kneeling/sitting was the most prominent type of protest activity (see Table 5). However, image tweets in which 10 or more people engaged in protest activities, indicating group size, only accounted for 9.43% of the image tweets (n = 132). Group size was almost equally expressed in images depicting football players and non-football players.

A crosstab analysis of minority support and group size shows that image tweets in which both people of color and non-people of color engage in protest activities appeared the most in image tweets with ten or more people and were non-football players (55 out of 126 image tweets that included both minority support and group size, 43.65%). Constructive patriotism only appeared in 9 images tweets that also were coded with group size, while no there were no image tweets that consisted of both sports fandoms and group size. Aside from protest activities and group size, in five image tweets another type of efficacy was found, organization of protests.

These images consisted of fliers outlining dates and times in which an organized protest involving the NAPs was to take place.

Table 5  
*Frequency and Percentage of Efficacy Image Tweets*

Code	Code Frequency	Code Percentage
<b>Protest Activities</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>43.5%</b>
Kneeling / sitting	537	38.36%
Raised fist	25	1.79%
Kneeling/sitting and raising fist	41	2.93%
Locking arms	6	0.43%
<b>Group Size</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>9.43%</b>
Football players	56	4%
Non-football players	76	5.43%
<b>*Organization of protests</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.36%</b>

\* emerging codes

## 5. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The NAPs provides a meaningful context on how Twitter can be used to voice several concepts related to collective action and social identities within the United States. As stated previously throughout this study, the NAPs are highly polarized and consists of a multifaceted debates encompassing sports culture, race relations, and freedom of speech and patriotism (MacCambridge, 2017). In this study, a visual content analysis was performed on image tweets containing the hashtag #TakeAKnee in order to determine the presence and extent of expressed social identities, grievances, and coping strategies (both emotional and instrumental) during the 2017 NAPs. In general, the findings indicate that minority support (social identity), political figures as anti-protest mobilizers (grievances), admiration (emotional route), and kneeling/sitting (instrumental route) appeared the most in comparison to their respective code categories.

As expected, minority support is the most dominant social identity expressed within the image tweets, and this result is consistent with previous studies on SIT. In fact, numerous SIT scholars have argued that people identify with low status groups to order to initiate collective action to achieve social change when the political and social climate are viewed as illegitimate and unstable, suggesting that these goals are achievable (Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren et al., 2009; Van Zomeren et al., 2012). The context of the NAPs is suitable to these terms because not only has there been polarized views in regard to President Donald Trump's election, but the public has also been strongly divided in areas such as gun control and racial inequality (Doherty, 2014). Additionally, race has been shown to a prominent influencer for collective action tendencies (Coward et al., 2016; LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2016), validating the findings for RQ1.

Although constructive patriotism and sports fandoms are both initially perceived as additional social identities, their scarce appearance in the image tweets suggest that even though attempts to direct the topic of conversation away from race relations towards the first amendment right to freedom of speech and the flaws within the NFL, the original message of the NAPs is not blurred. Findings from LeFebvre and Armstrong (2016) suggest that protest mobilizers have the ability to drive the online dialogue to a higher volume. Although this may be true in the context of the NAPs, as directly following the Trump's first tweet that condemned the protests 2.4 million tweets used the hashtag #TakeAKnee (Monllos, 2017), RQ1 results suggest that anti-protest mobilizers may not have the same influence in shifting focus from the protests intended purpose. Thus, future research should delve further into the effects of anti-protest mobilizers in non-violent protests, especially in polarized contexts.

An interesting finding from the image tweets is an emerging social identity, protest avatars. Protest avatars refers to images varied from a representation of the actual person to fictional characters (such as superheroes), to non-human creatures (such as household pets). According to Gerbaudo (2015), protest avatars as a form of collective identification are powerful in the short term but can prove to be volatile as time progresses. Again, the protest avatars within context of NAPs image tweets are not profile pictures but tweeted images. Therefore, the effectiveness of these types of protest avatars which are used to voice support of the NAPs through protest activities is up for debate and is a possible avenue for future research into collective identities.

Because the NAPs began as a response to police brutality in the United States, a possible grievance of those posting image tweets on Twitter is police brutality as a form of institutional racism. Additionally, in the past studies, negatively arousing messages, such as images of police brutality, tend to attract more attention, cause heightened physical and emotional arousal, and are remembered longer, thus it can be reasonably assumed that viewing negative arousing images can influence behavior and are tweeted more often than not (Kharroub & Bas, 2016). However, only 1.79% of image tweets contain negatively arousing images of police officers beating, tackling, or shooting people. One possible explanation of these results is that because the NAPs are considered a peaceful protest as the accepted protest activities only involve kneeling/sitting, raising fists, or locking arms in solidarity, those who tweeted out images of police brutality would first have to research for the documented images of violence in which to share via Twitter. This does not only take the spontaneity out of Twitter posting but also allows for criticism by peers for sharing images of victims during their attacks. However, it should be noted that although the percentage for police brutality is miniscule, 8.43% of image tweets that depict the reciprocal affective response of sympathy show people of color with painful expressions along with portraits of murder victims and calls to end unjustified killings. Although people would still need to research for victims, this type of image tweet provides a more socially acceptable way to voice displeasure against police brutality.

In regard to image tweets that are coded within the emotional route of coping, reciprocal affective responses are expressed a little more than double the amount of shared affective responses. As mentioned previously, negative arousing messages are expected to be tweeted more often than positive arousing images (Kharroub & Bas, 2016), and therefore images with shared affective responses should have been more prevalent in image tweets than reciprocal affective responses. However, when group members fail to blame an external agent for their grievances, they are likely to feel less agitated emotions (Walker & Smith, 2002). Thus, in the context of the NAPs these results are not too surprising. This is because the external blame for

the protest is muddled and complex. Take for example the grievance of institutional racism. Should the U.S federal government be held accountable for instances of police brutality or should the state government regulate themselves? Or, is President Donald Trump responsible for this on-going issue due his attempts to shift the focus of the NAPs away from race relations? Also consistent with previous studies (Saab et al., 2015; Sweetman et al., 2013), findings show that sympathy and admiration are the two prominent reciprocal affective responses in the NAPs.

Moreover, although scarce, two emerging codes for the emotional affective route to coping are identified within the data: humor and solidarity. Humor is found within the shared affective response sub code as the characteristics of humor images align with the superiority theory of humor. This theory argues that humor comes from the desire to feel superior. Thus, this type of humor commonly includes outwardly ridiculing or mocking the actions of others in order to discipline them using laughter, allowing for the correction of social behaviors (Anagondahalli & Khamis, 2014). This finding is consistent with previous studies as socio-cultural and political humor has been found to be a form of resistance in social movements and protests (Kaptan, 2016). One of the most popular combinations is humor and political figures. Specifically, involving Donald Trump. These images place Trump in situations meant to provide evidence of illegitimacy and inadequacy in regard to his presidency, as well as attack his personal character (i.e. calling him a white supremacist, misogynist, or obese).

Solidarity, on the other hand, is found within the reciprocal affective response code. This affective response includes positive emotions towards in-group members that foster kinship (i.e., trust, loyalty, affection) (Goodwin et al., 2000), in addition to showing a voiced interest to participate in collective action. These findings are consistent with previous research that identifies solidarity as a prevalent emotion within social movements. For example, solidarity-based emotions expressed by protesters, such as joy and pride, have been found to increase self-efficacy in group members (Bower & Forgas, 2001). Additionally, positive emotions have also been found to be a result from group appraisal of goal facilitation (Van Troost et al., 2013). Thus, within the context of the NAPs, those who approve of the protest and what it wishes to accomplish are prone to show solidarity as a reciprocal affective response.

For the instrumental route, namely efficacy, only findings under sub-code of protest activities are consistent with previous research. For example, in a visual content analysis by Kharroub & Bas (2016), they found protest activities in almost half of image tweet sample data. However, in the same study group size was shown in almost a third of the dataset. In the context of the NAPs, group size is only found in 9.43% of the image tweets. The expected number of participants in social movements is not only one of the most important determinants of willingness to participate (Klandermans, 1984), but can also be seen as a type of social support which can increase efficacy (Van Zomeren et al., 2004). The minimal amount of images with groups present and partaking in protest activities may be due to the fact that the NAPs are mostly conducted in large numbers only during sporting events. Additional avenues in which to publicly protest are scarce, especially if protesting is done during the playing of the national anthem.

Lastly, as mentioned previously, the emerging code “organization of protests” is found in five of the image tweets and can be conceptualized as another form of instrumental social support (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). Previous research has found that instrumental social support, or the willingness to participate can increase group efficacy and promote collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2004). It should be noted that because the collection of image tweets followed a specific time frame, it may be possible for this emerging code to become more prevalent as the

NAPs progressed. A reasoning for this could be because when the 2017 NFL season came to its conclusion, in order to continue the protests out of the domain of the sports arena, citizens could organize further protests remnant of the NAPs. Therefore, although scarce, the organization of protests as an emerging sub code of efficacy is significant.

Although this study provides interesting insight into the online communication patterns of the NAPs, it is not without its limitations. Firstly, image tweets were only gathered during a specific time frame during the course of the NAPs and therefore did not take data throughout the entire protest period. Although this time period was chosen in accordance to Google Trend data on NAP web search penetration, it is nonetheless a sample of the population and therefore the findings might not be an accurate representation of the entire U.S population. Secondly, as Twitter does not reveal details on its algorithm for determining “top” tweets, the sampling frame of image tweets might not contain all of the popular images. Therefore, for replications of this study, future research should account for images shared on other social media platforms in addition to Twitter content.

Thirdly, this study did not account for demographic information of Twitter users. One reason for this is because profile images do not always represent the person responsible for posting content. Therefore, determining demographic information of the poster (i.e., race, age, gender) as well as the location in which they live within the United States is difficult to ascertain. In order to fully understand the NAP supporters partaking in image tweet content creation and sharing, future research into the demographic information would be beneficial.

Theoretically, the findings of this study have shed light on the complex nature of the NAPs by analyzing how American participants use Twitter to voice concerns and criticisms about grievances (such as institutional racism). The findings also identified the competing social identities present in NAPs, and have found that race was the most dominant social identity that fueled this civic protests. In addition, this study applied an adapted DPPM, in addition to concepts within SIT, to analyze the polarized national civic protests via Twitter platforms as research has primarily addressed violent protests and social movements during widespread unrest (Kharroub & Bas, 2016; LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2016).

As mentioned previously, although the U.S Constitution protects the right to peaceful protest along with the freedom of speech, President Trump openly condemned the NAPs. In practice, the results of this study are significant because they show that although those in power (i.e. political figures, and other high profile members of throughout the protests) may possess agenda setting capabilities, during the NAPs their posts and comments about social movements and protests did not have the significantly shape people’s discussions in digital public space. Additionally, as the NFL NAPs could possibly start anew in the 2018 NFL season, addressing the concerns of the citizens (identified through visual analysis of Twitter images) can be beneficial resolving the primary issues surrounding the protests.

Previous studies have analyzed the importance of social media platforms in aiding activists and advocacy groups with outreach efforts (Harpe et al., 2012; Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012), facilitate protest actions (Theocharis et. al, 2013), and foster public diplomacy (Burns & Eltham, 2009). However, few scholars have focused on the citizens themselves posting images to Twitter and instead have focused on organizations and large groups (i.e. Cowart et al., 2016; Seo, 2014). Lastly, as pictures were collected via Twitter Advanced Search, using the hashtag #TakeAKnee and employs visual content analysis to code the data, with regard to the method this study help advance research involving analysis of images posted on social media during



political protesting (Cowart et al., 2016; Kharroub & Bas, 2016; Russmann & Svensson, 2017; Seo, 2014; Wetzstein, 2017).

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## APPENDIX A

### Coding Instrument

<b>Code:</b> Social Identity – Individuals self-categorize themselves in terms of the social groups they belong (Chan, 2017).			
<b>Sub Code</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Number</b>
Social Identity		SI	
Minority Member Support	Images that include people who show support of minority members and the protest by engaging in protest activities or voicing support of NAPs (i.e. kneeling, raising fist, wearing t-shirts supporting NAPs). Can also include photos that serve as self-portraits and/or minority heritage with tweet text that has a support context.	MS	1
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p><b>Description:</b> Dominant representation of Caucasian members engaging in kneeling and raising a fist. Some have their hands over their hearts and some are smiling.</p> <p><b>Tweet Text (NAP support):</b> Liar mobster rapist racist traitor @realDonaldTrump Shame on you! #takeaknee #treason is Not Respect for ----</p> </div> </div>			
Constructive Patriotism	Because support of minority members and constructive patriotism may have significant overlap, images that include people (i.e. self-portraits) and or actions that support the 1st amendment and supporters right to engage in activities related to the amendment (i.e. advocated for freedom of speech) will be considered for constructive patriotism. Images that show affiliation to the military will only be regarded as constructive patriotism.	CP	2



	<p><b>Description:</b> Picture of someone in the U.S Navy holding a gun and standing on presumably a ship belonging to the U.S Navy.</p> <p><b>Tweet text (NAP support):</b> I served 4 years active duty to allow others the freedom to #TakeAKnee. Americans have the right to peacefully protest &amp; use their rights.</p>
Sports Fandoms	<p>Image tweets that have sports fandoms as a social identity includes pictures of people either wearing clothing articles pertaining to specific team logos, team mascots, the NFL, football, et. These items additionally may be the sole focus of the image tweet.</p> <p>SF</p> <p>3</p>
	<p><b>Description:</b> Logo and name of NFL team, the Washington Redskins. Text confirms concept of “we” through support of team and team members who protest.</p> <p><b>Tweet text (NAP support):</b> Let's go @Redskins !#TakeAKneeRedskins #HTTR #TakeAKnee #TakeTheKnee</p>

**Code: Grievances (GR)** – A sense of indignation about the way authorities are treating a social or political problem (Klandermans et al., 2008)

Sub Code	Operational Definition	Abbr.	Number
Institutional Racism		IR	
Police Brutality	Police Brutality is considered to be violence against African Americans or other minority groups. Violence includes beating, tackling, shooting, and other types of excessive force used by police members.	PB	4



**Description:** A total of five police officers reprimanding one elderly African American Woman.

Uniformed police member tackling African American woman

Uniformed police member choking African American woman.

**Tweet Text (NAP support):** #ICYMI 🐷 The Armed pigs violently attacked #StLprotests today. #TakeAKnee #AnthonyLamarSmith #JasonStockley #BlackLivesMatter #NFLBoycott 🙏🙏

Anti – Protest Mobilizers		AM	
Political Figures	Sample pictures of political figures as an anti-protest mobilizer may include members of conservative political parties (i.e. President Donald Trump, Mike Pence, Steve Bannon) and although unlikely, may also include members of liberal political parties. These images may include depictions of political figures made to look incompetent, idiotic, arrogant, hypocritical, or unqualified due to how they handle discussions about the NAPs or their actions that regard NAPs (i.e. leaving the stadium after witnessing NAPs). These discussions and actions should prove to be unfavorable to the NAP supporters.	PF	5




**Description:** Known political figures belonging to the Republican party placing right hand over heart presumably during the national anthem.

President Donald Trump is the only member pictured who is not placing hand over heart.

**Tweet Text (NAP support):** Who is this unpatriotic SOB...3rd one from the left? Oh Wait! Well I'll be damned. #TakeAKnee

NFL Organization	Sample images of the NFL organization as a type of anti-protest mobilizer should include pictures of NFL logos, products, coaches, team owners, board members, or the NFL Commissioner Rodger Goodell, etc. These images may depict the NFL organization and its members negatively such as being irresponsible, immoral, unreasonable, etc., for how they handle the discussions about the NAPs (i.e. condemning players, introducing laws prohibiting players from engaging in NFL protests) or their actions stemming from the NAPs (i.e. threatening to fire players who kneel). These discussions and actions should prove to be unfavorable or unreasonable to NAP supporters.	NO	6
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**Description:** A large red X with “BOYCOTT” bolded and capitalized placed over a known NFL logo.

**Tweet text (NAP support):** #PoC Remember ... #Everywhere Always PLz #TakeAKnee  
🙌 🏠 ❤️ ❤️ 🙌 🏠 🏠

**Code:** Coping (Emotional Route) Shared Affective Responses: Emotional responses held by a group at the same time but, they do not have the other group members as their objects. The group nurtures feelings received from and toward outsiders such as anger (Jasper et al., 1998).

Sub Code	Operational Definition	Abbr.	Number
Shared Affective Responses		SR	
Anger	Images that show anger toward out-group members (i.e. anti-protest mobilizers, protest opposition supporters). Anger images can include profane language, violent and degrading acts toward outgroup members, and can contain facial expressions such as scowls. Other depictions can also include hyperbolic expressions such as steam coming out of the ears, crinkled eyebrows, enlarged angry eyes etc.	AN	7



**Description:** Previous Presidents all looking toward a common thing.  
 ‘What the fuck,’ abbreviated as “WTF...” is a common expression that incorporates profane language and is used to communicate anger or confusion.

**Tweet Text (NAP support):** #TakeAKnee

Sarcasm	Images that include sarcasm as a shared affective response are those that have conflicting meanings (i.e. political cartoons) and are intended to criticize the protest opposition. Prime examples are those that highlight hypocrisy of outgroup members (i.e. using the flag as decoration, insulting minority members to highlight idiocy of opposition)	SR	8
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**Description:** Image is of white male angry with Kaepernick. Confederate flag is being used as a decoration on a truck, which is not its intended purpose, while Kaepernick is kneeling before U.S flag.  
 The picture text accuses Kaepernick as being disrespectful. This is hypocritical and conflicts with the images intended message.

**Tweet text (NAP support):** No rules/laws broken = SOB Nazi premeditated murder = nice people #ImWithKap. #TakeAKnee #ImpeachTrump

**Code:** Coping (Emotional Route) Reciprocal Affective Responses – Refers to emotional responses that include participants’ on-going feelings toward each other, such as solidarity and loyalty, and the specific emotions they elicit. Shared emotions are those held by the group participants at the same time (Jasper et al., 1998).

Sub Code	Operational Definition	Abbr.	Number
Reciprocal Affective Responses		RR	
Sympathy	Images that aim to elicit compassion for disadvantaged out-group members. Such images may include suffering minority members (painful expressions, injured persons, experiencing open acts of racial prejudice) or those murdered unjustly (i.e. police brutality victims, historical cases of white on black murder). These images are meant to paint the target of the image as a victim.	SY	10
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 80%;"> <p><b>Description:</b> Shows images that include those involved with the famous murder case of Emmett Till, a racially charged and heinous murder by John Milam. Image also includes a description of the murder case. At the bottom of the image the words “Emmett Till Legacy Foundation” are accompanied with #EmmettTill60</p> </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Tweet Text (NAP support):</b> #TakeAKneeNFL #TakeAKnee #EmmettTill #remember</p> </div>			
Admiration	Images that include supporters of the NAPs (i.e. Colin Kaepernick, Steph Curry, President Obama, Megan Rapinoe) or those engaging in protest activities (kneeling, sitting, fists raised) being recognized by other people through their Twitter accounts (i.e. posting a picture of their son, daughter, organization member, idol).	AD	2





**Description:** A smiling President Obama and Steph Curry in the Oval Office standing together with one arm around the other.

**Tweet text (NAP support):**  
 @StephenCurry30 been there done that when it was classy to do. It's full of trash now.  
 #TakeAKnee #Resist #ImpeachTrump

**Code:** Coping (Instrumental Route) **Efficacy:** "One's collective belief that group-related problems can be solved by collective effort" (Van Zomeren et al., 2004).

Sub Code	Operational Definition	Abbr.	Number
Efficacy		EF	
Protest Activities	Images containing protest activities (i.e. kneeling, standing with fist raised, sitting, locking arms).	PA	1



**Description:** Professional soccer players stand during the national anthem while Megan Rapinoe, apparently kneels alone on the sideline

**Tweet Text (NAP support):** .@mPinoe showed the way #TakeAKnee 1 yr ago @KingJames @JedYork #Kaepernick

Group Size	Images that include and place emphasis (i.e. the focal point of the picture) on groups of protesters (10 or more people).	GS	2
<div data-bbox="230 394 717 808"> </div> <div data-bbox="769 443 1377 583"> <p><b>Description:</b> More than 10 Bronco players, an NFL team, engage in kneeling and raising a fist in solidarity presumably during the national anthem</p> </div> <div data-bbox="769 625 1382 756"> <p><b>Tweet text (NAP support):</b> Overwhelming number of the Denver @Broncos Took A Knee At Today's Game #TakeAKnee #DefendDonaldTrump</p> </div>			

Note: \*indicates that a comment will be needed in order to justify why the image was coded as such.