

Meikle, Paulette A.; Morris, Lekeitha R.

## Article

# University social responsibility: Challenging systemic racism in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder

Administrative Sciences

## Provided in Cooperation with:

MDPI – Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, Basel

*Suggested Citation:* Meikle, Paulette A.; Morris, Lekeitha R. (2022) : University social responsibility: Challenging systemic racism in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, Administrative Sciences, ISSN 2076-3387, MDPI, Basel, Vol. 12, Iss. 1, pp. 1-19,  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12010036>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/275307>

## Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

## Terms of use:

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

## Article

# University Social Responsibility: Challenging Systemic Racism in the Aftermath of George Floyd's Murder

Paulette A. Meikle <sup>1,\*</sup> and Lekeitha R. Morris <sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> College of Arts and Sciences, University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, Fort Smith, AR 72913, USA<sup>2</sup> Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, College of Fine Arts and Communication, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX 77710, USA; lmorris6@lamar.edu

\* Correspondence: paulette.meikle@uafs.edu

**Abstract:** In this paper, we examine university discretionary interpretation of the 2020 social upheaval that emanated from George Floyd's murder as an element of university social responsibility (USR) policymaking. The paper addresses two research questions: (a) What are university presidents' implicit and explicit social justice responses to George Floyd's death and the idealistic protests of 2020? (b) To what degree are principles of social justice embedded in universities' intellectual roots and social responsibility? Using a sample of university presidents' public statements in response to George Floyd's death and the idealistic protests of 2020, we analyze the response and responsibilities of universities in the struggle for a just society. We cross-check mission statements and strategic plans to corroborate universities' public statements with their institutional philosophies, mission, and action plans relating to discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities and systemic racism. We use critical discourse analysis and the Voyant Tool to perform a textual analysis of 62 university presidents' letters and mission statements. They all denounced the dehumanization and inequitable treatment of Black people. An important implication of our work is the sharp difference in the depth and forthrightness of responses by university presidents across university types. Some presidential letters are forthright in their denouncement of the murder of George Floyd and systemic racism, while others were, at best, vague in their approach. Presidential letters disclose their institutions' priorities, organizational identities, and social responsibility convictions. Overall, mission statements and strategic plans included addressing systemic racism and inequality. While there is no ordered symmetry between presidential narratives and institutional action, we anticipate social responsibility as a core institutional value. We argue for social justice anti-racist platforms as critical dimensions of USR. We call for university milieus that promote a fair and just society among all stakeholders.

**Keywords:** university social responsibility; social justice; university leadership

**Citation:** Meikle, Paulette A., and Lekeitha R. Morris. 2022. University Social Responsibility: Challenging Systemic Racism in the Aftermath of George Floyd's Murder. *Administrative Sciences* 12: 36. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12010036>

Received: 1 January 2022

Accepted: 17 February 2022

Published: 21 February 2022

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The collective and cultural trauma of the murder of George Floyd in 2020 thrust society into a series of jolts. It stirred humanity's soul and sharpened its conscience receptacles. The novice video capture of former Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, kneeling on Floyd's neck for approximately nine suffocating minutes during his arrest (for the alleged use of a counterfeit 20-dollar bill) became a visual and eviscerating reminder of social injustice. Shockwaves reverberated in classrooms and the hallways of universities and schools, the media, workplaces, and homes locally, nationally, and internationally. The world took notice.

Across the United States and the globe, streets were laden with diverse and unified voices chanting for justice, police reform, and an end to systemic racism. An inflamed global coalition of human volatility, protests, and social discordance emerged, and the streets flooded with tears. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement mobilized to new levels of civil rights activism across all 50 U.S. states. They sought recourse for the escalating brute

force by authority figures against Black and Brown people. To explore how universities contribute to society beyond the formal education of their students, two research questions were identified: (a) What are university presidents' implicit and explicit social justice responses to the murder of George Floyd and the idealistic protests of 2020? (b) To what degree are principles of social justice embedded in universities' intellectual roots and social responsibility?

## 2. Societal Response to George Floyd's Murder

A 2020 Pew Research Center study was designed to understand Americans' attitudes about recent demonstrations and race relations generally in the U.S. following George Floyd's death. The results show that two-thirds of U.S. adults support the BLM movement. They found that this support is particularly strong among Black Americans, although Whites (60%), Hispanics (77%), and Asian Americans (75%) expressed support as well. Seven in ten indicated that anger over Floyd's death after his arrest by police had contributed significantly to the protests. Sixty-nine percent pointed to broader tensions between Black people and the police. Additionally, 65% noted the protesters were motivated by longstanding concerns about the treatment of Black people (Parker et al. 2020). BLM became the most widespread and extensive cross-racial and socially diverse force against police brutality and structural racism. The pervasiveness of the protests was a collective response to collective trauma.

Eyerman (2019) argues that both individual and collective trauma have a mutual thread of shock. The injuries experienced are collective and socially shared as much as they are individual in character. He further argues that "individual and collective traumas may also be thought of as reinforcing one another, making the shock and sense of loss even greater" (p. 43). George Floyd's murder was an induced collective trauma and is a form of cultural trauma, when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander 2004, p. 1). He also argues that cultural trauma is an area of social responsibility and political action.

The widespread social agitation evoked reactions among thought leaders, community leaders, lawmakers, social justice advocates, and university leaders. University presidents penned condemning narratives that were transmitted via internet portals. They publicly denounced the brutal murder of George Floyd, the widespread dehumanization of Black and Brown people by authorized force, and racialized inequality. This historical moment ushered university leaders into conferences to contemplate their social obligations, and stakeholders (students, professors, researchers, other staff, and communities in their service regions) looked to them for direction. A moment of pause and reflection ensued to assess, respond, engage, and lead; in essence, to invoke the tenets of university social responsibility. Penned texts and oral utterances became socially constructed precepts, shared meanings, and gateways into organizational postures and climates for the discerning public and researchers alike.

Protests signal coalesced expressions of unmet community and economic needs, democratic expectations, and a fervent commitment to social justice. The absence of protests by no means signals equality: the ceasing of visible tensions simply means it is time to act. Tackling the structural dimensions of civic unrest, lawmakers scrambled to reassess and reshape policing in America, focusing on systemic change in American policing. Progress has unfolded in this arena. Thirty-six states and Washington DC introduced more than 700 bills addressing police accountability; nearly 100 have been enacted. More than half the states passed law enforcement legislation before the end of 2020 (NCSL 2021). The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, 2021, seeks to enact an accountable system regarding police misconduct and excessive force at the federal level. It launches a framework to thwart and mitigate racial profiling and racial bias in policing. It sets in motion a shift in law enforcement culture and an avenue that builds trust between law enforcement

and communities by addressing systemic racism and bias. It reshapes public safety in an equitable and just way (H.R. 1280, 117th Congress 2021).

Even as this pivotal piece of federal legislation lags in the Senate, we anticipate its full implementation. Law provides the tool for challenge in the judiciary, providing the platform to be heard, to name an injury in words recognized in law, to introduce evidence, to cross-examine, and to have an enforceable decision applied to injustices (Capeheart and Milovanovic 2020). On the other hand, it is discretionary for universities to identify, study, and confront structural racism and its unjust derivatives. How are universities responding as legislators work to redress overt discrimination, police brutality, and systemic racism? Are universities making social justice a part of their organizational identity and mission? The response to external social dynamics is informed by institutional identity and, in turn, affects institutional identity over time (Stensaker 2014). Historically, universities have been challenged by the external expectations directed at them in times of crisis. The external dimension of university responsibility has become more and more critical in university identities. Organizational identity refers to “shared assumptions that are socially constructed: they do not exist objectively in reality but are culturally, socially, and cognitively developed assumptions about reality” (Clegg et al. 2007, p. 499).

### 2.1. University Social Responsibility

The social upheavals of 2020 highlighted the most pressing of social issues in the U.S. and around the globe. In the U.S., racial injustice and inequality incidents surfaced unprecedentedly amidst overt threats to voting rights—all unfolding during the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic (which disproportionately affected Black and Brown people in the U.S.). “Racial prejudices and discrimination are entrenched in our political, educational, social, economic, and justice structures” (Meikle 2020, p. 5).

Social responsibility refers to the ways universities are addressing the social, environmental, and economic well-being of their communities. It involves engaging communities for mutual learning and social development while facilitating the development of responsible, engaged, and socially just citizens (Vallaey 2013; Vásquez et al. 2014; Sengupta et al. 2020). Balancing stakeholders’ expectations and university resources are a USR core value. USR is often viewed as a voluntary contribution to social, economic, and environmental development, “through which material, intellectual, managerial, and other resources are most effectively directed to the implementation of social programs and activities developed according to the trends of modern social needs and public interests” (Rababah et al. 2021, p. 5).

In this paper, we assess universities’ discretionary interpretations of social justice principally focused on concrete consciousness and action and an analysis of abstract and mediated forms of university narratives in response to George Floyd’s death. We examined presidential letters, mission statements, and strategic plans as they relate to the role and responsibilities of universities and how they intersect with the broader community in the pursuit of a just and civil society. We argue that a university’s response to collective and cultural traumas is a fundamental institutional obligation and a dimension of USR. For example, numerous universities responded to the collective trauma in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that devastated the social, economic, and environmental systems of the coast of Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico on 29 August 2005. Approximately 1800 people died, and over 800,000 were displaced (Khanjar 2020). Over 960 Campus Compact universities welcomed displaced students, waiving tuition and other fees. Boston University, for example, enrolled 320 displaced students. Others worked in affected communities, assisting families with housing, food, equipment, and healthcare (Campus Compact 2021). Some universities engaged in long-term institutional measures. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, Tulane University systematically developed a culture of collaboration and social responsibility (Schwartz 2020). Like universities’ responses to the aftermath of Katrina, the collective trauma associated with the murder of George Floyd evoked social responsibility on university campuses in diverse places.

Intentional social responsibility among university leaders is necessary for this current era of social upheavals surrounding inequality. This should not be a reactionary “insert” but inbuilt in the university brand. Strategies should be meaningful and transformative and not symbolic and conservative.

As we reflect on the truncated life of George Floyd and the lives of so many Black and Brown Americans, the pain of the present reconnects us to the legacy of oppression. Yet, the prevailing rhetoric in the highest social and educational offices pronounces justice and dignity for all and equality for all facets of humanity, regardless of race, gender, religion, or creed (Meikle 2020). Universities are rife with intellectual forthrightness, political influence, analytic competencies, and academic infrastructure to address the structural biases related to inequality and perpetuation of dehumanizing social problems. Historically, universities have been leaders in innovation, knowledge acquisition, and the dissemination of factually sound information. They are social and cultural change catalysts and are at the center of autonomous enlightening institutions.

Action is the bedrock of social justice and USR. “Critical analysis does not only criticize, but it also references ideas and practices that are essential, needed, or critical for something to happen” (Hill Collins et al. 2021, p. 691). As intellectual front-runners and visionaries, university leaders are increasingly called on to incorporate social responsibility in their organizational strategies (Rababah et al. 2021). They are drivers and masters of social change in concrete terms. In an era of tumult, racial divide, and racial injustices in the criminal justice system and broader societal contexts, explicit university social responsibility is necessary. Can universities stimulate a more profound and accurate understanding of the origin and purpose of the BLM movement, beyond its aspirational tenets to its practical social change principles? Can the appetite for change, civility, and equality witnessed in the streets translate into university response? How can we use the resonant sounds of cohesive voices of justice in the U.S. that echoed in distant places as a charge to learn how to make society more just and equitable?

## 2.2. University Social Responsibility: Social Justice Narratives and Institutional Strategies

For this paper, USR involves critical analyses of how narratives, rhetoric, and historical institutional structures create and perpetuate systems of benefit and burden. In his seminal work, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971) posits that justice is the first virtue of social institutions. Universities have historically shaped lives, cultures, and the welfare of communities. Meikle and Morris (2022) assert that collective injustices and collective traumas require collaborative, cooperative, strategic, and intentional solutions at the institutional level. They further argue that institutional ideas and innovation can challenge the undesirable heritage of injustice, cut the roots of its divisions and disperse seeds of fairness for intergenerational legacy, thus bequeathing to the next generation a safe, secure, fair, and just society. Those in privileged positions are inherently imbued with social responsibility to contribute to social justice and equality.

University presidents’ public statements in response to George Floyd’s death and the idealistic protests of 2020 indicate varying levels of commitment to social justice. The University and its prolific platform of human capital, practical infrastructure, and the myriad of instructional tools help create a well-educated and equipped society to lead justly. University presidents are inherently influential and can impact various stakeholders locally, nationally, and even globally.

## 3. Methods

We used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to identify recurrent discursive themes in the letters written by university presidents in their responses to the murder of George Floyd. CDA was also used to evaluate the degree to which principles of social justice were embedded in universities’ intellectual roots and how social justice is explicitly included in policy and activities in the academic context through an examination of their mission statements and strategic plans. CDA is tied to theory and practice and defines discourse



through the use of language as a form of social practice (Goffman 1983). CDA allows one to examine how lexical choice, grammatical construction, and phrasing reflect, evoke, and reflect the writer's ideological values and positioning. The use of CDA also includes identifying visibly absent elements (Yu et al. 2021), for example, the absence of the word goal or goals when writing a strategic plan. One would never do this, but inevitably it happens when the topic is racial injustice or systemic racism.

The use of CDA allowed us to investigate how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. Using the presidential statements followed by mission statements and strategic plans allowed us to examine if power relations were evident in the discourse of university presidents. Further, we evaluated if there was congruency between the letters, mission statements, and strategic plans. An evaluation of mission statements and strategic plans helps us to understand social problems and how/if universities are working to balance these social inequities (Rogers et al. 2005). In qualitative research, the markers of rigor include systematicity, triangulation, transparency, and accountability (Golafshani 2003; Yu et al. 2021). The analytical process used in the current study adopted Mullet's (2018) analytic process, which includes seven stages (selecting the discourse, locating and preparing the data sources, exploring the background of the texts, identifying overarching themes, analyzing external relations in the texts, analyzing the internal relations in the texts, and interpreting the data) and allows the researcher to move back and forth between data sources, as is carried out with constant comparative analysis.

We also used data triangulation to understand university social responsibility better. Triangulation is defined as using more than one type of data source or methods in qualitative research to better understand the same phenomenon (Patton 1999). The purpose of data triangulation was to capture different dimensions of university social responsibility. Our samples included letters written by university presidents, mission statements, and strategic plans.

In stages 1, 2, and 3 of the data sorting process, selecting the discourse, data sources, and their backgrounds, we examined university presidents' statements as a lens to evaluate university commitment to societal inequities. How they responded to the murder of George Floyd provided valuable insight into how they address social responsibility issues on their campuses. The mission statements and strategic plans were examined for evidence that social justice and anti-racist themes were embedded into various facets of the university.

Mission statements articulate the purpose of a university's existence and core beliefs/values, the patterns that guide its operations, and what strategies it plans to use to achieve its purpose. Universities' strategic plans are a good source for data as they are the organization's blueprint or roadmap for progress. They include the processes and the products for achieving goals. Strategic plans provide more of a roadmap and allow an institution to determine what areas to focus on for future success. Strategic plans are also used to align and inform stakeholders of what the overall strategic priorities are for the university. They communicate the goals to the campus community and external constituents (community, alumni, donors, etc.). University strategic plans include an explanation of the planning process, the university's foundational information, which typically consists of the institution's mission, vision, core values, strategies for achieving the goals, and how the institution will measure its progress, and metrics.

Stage 4: Identifying major themes and subthemes: We read the documents to become familiar with participants' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. Additionally, we searched for terms that have been identified in the social justice literature and identified common themes in the letters, mission statements, and strategic plans. Stages 5–7: Analyzing external/internal relations and interpreting the data. In Stage 5 (analyzing external relations), we ascertained what social practices or social injustices were being reflected by the themes in the universities' presidential statements. Stage 6 was defined by the analysis of internal relations. We carefully examined the statements as well as the strategic plans and mission statements for vocabulary and other linguistic elements to determine social action posi-

tions. This also helped us to understand whether universities believed they have a social responsibility for addressing issues of social justice.

### *Sample*

The research questions clearly define the population and concept of interest. The first step was to identify the discourse that would allow us to examine the role and responsibilities of universities in the struggle for a just society. We began with presidential statements released by universities regarding the murder of George Floyd. The literature search was undertaken between March of 2021 and July 2021. The search was conducted using Google. The search strings included: presidential statement—George Floyd; college presidents—George Floyd; and murder of George Floyd—university presidents. We identified 102 statements from university presidents; however, the final sample included only the universities where we could locate their strategic plans. This resulted in a sample of 62 statements from 34 public institutions and 28 private institutions. Of the 62, 12 were Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), 43 were Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), and 7 were Ivy League institutions. We then evaluated the universities' mission and the strategic plans to understand university social responsibility better. See Table A1 for a list of the sample universities.

To answer research question 1, the letters were entered into Voyant Tools, a web-based text reading and analysis environment that uses visualization tools to analyze a text corpus. The purpose of this was to identify the most frequently occurring words in the statements and to determine if there were similarities and differences according to the university type (HBCU, PWI and Ivy League). We calculated the average length of the statements for each university type. An immersion into the data allowed familiarity with presidents' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences (Spradley 1980), articulated in the statements. In this vein, we dissected presidential letters and general themes were identified. Codes were then categorized and focused into meaningful themes. We recognized patterns and situated the findings with results from the data obtained using the university mission statements and strategic plans.

To address research question 2, mission statements and strategic plans were analyzed. The mission statements and strategic plans were examined for evidence that social justice and anti-racist themes were embedded into various facets of the university. The search terms included service to the community, systemic racism, service/community engagement, students from diverse backgrounds, social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## **4. Results**

In this section, we detail the results of research question 1, what are implicit and explicit university conceptions and responses to social justice? On average, the length of statements from presidents of HBCUs was longer than those from presidents at Ivy League institutions and PWIs. There were significantly fewer lexical choices. Consider, for example, the effect of two different approaches to describing the same person as a "protester" versus a "rioter" (Hart 2013). In the letters of the HBCU presidents, the most frequently occurring words included university, anti-blackness/antiracist/anti-racism, Black, and racist/racism. The words that occurred most frequently in the letters written by presidents at Ivy League institutions were community, anti-blackness/antiracist/anti-racism, and racist/racism. For the letters written by presidents at PWIs, the most frequently occurring words included community, university, anti-blackness/antiracist/anti-racism, racist/racism, and Black. There were similarities in the terms that occurred most frequently in the letters. Table 1 shows the most frequently occurring words in presidents' statements by university type. This initial analysis led us to examine the presidential statements more carefully to determine the messages communicated to their campuses. A deeper dive into the data revealed some explanations for why the letters from presidents at HBCUs tended to be longer. The following discursive themes help to explain the first research questions.

**Table 1.** Most frequently occurring themes by university type.

	HBCU (n = 12)	PWI (n = 43)	Ivy League (n = 7)
Average length of statements	580.50 words 242–1483	474.09 61–1333	478.43 words 203–809
University	33	106	7
Anti-Blackness/ Anti-racist/ anti-racism	32	69	16
Black	29	61	11
Racist/ racism	29	65	13
Protest/ protests/ protesting	26	28	2
Justice	24	55	9
Police	16	37	4
Community	15	159	19
Death	14	52	7
Violence	13	49	4
Riot/ riots/ rioting	10	11	1
Senseless	10	15	3
Murder/ killing	9	26	6
Injustice	9	26	4
Social justice	7	10	0

#### 4.1. Discourse Surrounding the Letters

##### 4.1.1. Systemic Racism and Racial Inequities

Each statement issued by HBCU presidents spoke of systemic racism and racial inequities. Many referenced the criminal justice system and the unjust and unfair laws and policies. Several HBCU presidents specifically mentioned that George Floyd died at the hands of a white police officer whose oath was to “protect and serve” and spoke of Mr. Floyd’s cries of “I can’t breathe” falling on the “ears of the callous and cold-hearted officer”. Several also referenced the systemic inequities that permeate every system within the United States of America and stories of oppression. For example, one president wrote, “there are countless stories of oppression that lead to false accusations of wrongdoing; disproportionate rates of poverty and incarceration; health disparities stemming from socio-economic circumstance, anti-immigrant injustice, black and white middle-class flight from ‘urban areas’; police misconduct, glass ceilings in corporate America; senseless murder all around”.

All statements issued by presidents at Ivy League institutions acknowledged systemic racism and racial inequities. Four of seven presidents referred to George Floyd dying in the custody of Minneapolis police officers and, similarly to HBCU presidents, made the point that at times Black people are “in fear of the very systems and structures that are supposed to be in place to ensure safety and justice”. These presidents echoed the persistent systemic racism in this country. One president wrote “we have witnessed yet again how this nation’s long legacy of racism continues to damage and destroy the lives of Black people”. Black was not one of the frequently occurring words in the letters from presidents at Ivy League institutions. It should be noted that although all seven presidents acknowledged systemic racism and racial inequities, the word Black or African American was not a frequently occurring word or phrase in the letters. For example, one president stated “the tragic and senseless death of George Floyd is a vivid reminder of the inequalities and unacceptable indignities that so many of our citizens constantly endure”.

Eighty-eight percent of the statements issued by the presidents at PWIs acknowledged systemic racism/ racial inequities within the country, and some used powerful language to do so. For example, the president of Adler University pledged “I promise the University will continue to engage on this issue, with your voices at every table, to dismantle the structural racism both inside Adler University and around our world”. Earlier in the letter, the president states “all these events further unmask the systemic racism that continues to violently oppress Black people in America and which we have seen on increasing display



over the last few weeks". Notably, five PWI statements did not include any mention of systemic racism.

#### 4.1.2. Dehumanization of Black People/Direct Denouncement of the Attack on Black Men

Dehumanization is the view that certain people should be denied uniquely human rights. Thus, out-groups are denied the privileges, activities, or agency that are ordinarily ascribed to in-groups (Markowitz and Slovic 2020). Presidents expressed frustration with Black people being treated as less than human. Of the 62 statements, all but four statements contained language that addressed the dehumanization of Black people. All four were written by presidents of PWIs. All the presidents at HBCUs and the Ivy League universities had sentences in their letters that expressed the dehumanization of Black people. Emerson College's president noted "George Floyd was invisible. And it was his invisibility, a brutal white power structure, and Chauvin's dehumanization of him that killed him". The murder of George Floyd was described as inhumane and deplorable by presidents at HBCUs and Ivy League institutions. Phrases such as "senseless murder", a "life cut short unnecessarily", and "brutally murdered" were used to depict the dehumanization of George Floyd. In one president's direct denouncement of the attack on Black men, he stated "the constant attack on the Black experience must end". Another issued the same sentiment by writing "the amount of pain in the Black community is unfathomable, especially as these are occurring in the midst of a pandemic that is having such a disproportionate impact on communities of color".

#### 4.1.3. Strong Condemnation of the Murder of George Floyd

Condemnation of the Murder of George Floyd was expressed by articulating a range of emotions. Eighty-three percent (10/12) of letters written by HBCU presidents expressed strong condemnation with regard to the murder of George Floyd. Seventy-one percent (5/7) of letters written by Ivy League presidents expressed strong opposition to the killing of George Floyd. Eighty-eight (38/43) percent of letters written by presidents at PWIs expressed condemnation in their letters.

#### 4.1.4. Personal Connection/Lived Experience

Sixty-seven percent (8/12) of letters written by HBCU presidents described a personal connection or a vested personal interest in what was happening around them. For example, one stated "it could have been either of my sons, my brothers, my nephews, or nieces, my friends or even one of my students who lay on the ground, pleading mercy on that horrific day". Another wrote "I write when I am bothered. I am bothered tonight" and continued to use that personal pronoun throughout the letter. Many HBCU presidents used "we" throughout their statements and gave advice to their students as though they were their own children. For example, one president ended his statement with "now govern yourselves as the Kings and Queens you are". Many of these letters expressed passion and commitment for the students. All the letters did not include this level of personal connection; however, it is noteworthy that most of the statements written by HBCU presidents contained this sentiment. None of the statements written by presidents at Ivy League institutions expressed a personal connection or linked the situation to their own lived experience.

Of the accounts written by presidents at PWIs, only two spoke of their lived experience. President Pelton of Emerson College began his letter by saying "today I write to you as a Black man and as a President of Emerson College". He continues to say "we mourn George Floyd. But let's not forget the other George Floyds of which he is but one". President Pelton continues to give accounts of the other Black men, women, and children of others who have been killed or targeted simply for being Black, including Ahmaud Arbery, Christian Cooper, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Botham Jean, and Breonna Taylor. President Rochon of the University of Southern Indiana states "I remember calling across our home to my wife to phone our 22-year-old son. We

needed to hear his voice at that very moment. I remember our 20-year old daughter looking me in the eyes and asking, ‘Baba, are we safe?’ as she sobbed in my arms. I remember wondering to myself, ‘what do I tell her... this time?’”. Although only two presidents at PWIs wrote letters that included their lived experience, others did acknowledge the pain being felt by those in the Black community. For example, one president at a PWI stated “I cannot understand this lived experience, as a white man, but I can witness and honor the pain and anger felt by many Black people in America”. The President of Michigan State University wrote “It is important, as Spartans, that we collectively understand and acknowledge the impact of racism and that the Black community is under attack in many ways right now... All of this is taking a heavy emotional toll on many of our friends, families, and fellow Spartans”.

#### 4.1.5. Resist Violence/Protest Peacefully

Sixty-seven percent (8/12) of HBCU presidents had sentences in their letters that encouraged their students to protest peacefully and resist violence. However, this was not the central focus of any of the letters HBCU presidents wrote. As it relates to protesting, five of the HBCU presidents made comments that riots are the results of systemic oppression, and some made references to Dr. King, “A riot is the language of the unheard”. Dr. Dillard of Shaw University wrote “The rioting that occurred in Raleigh, around our state, and all over America is a symptom of an illness that has gone untreated for far too long. Racism and injustice are the diseases, and if we look only at the symptoms, nothing will ever change”. These university presidents were not condoning rioting. However, they recognized the frustration and said to America “listen and make a change as a country”. Additionally, they said “stop deflecting and deal with the underlying issue of systemic racism and oppression”. This same sentiment was reflected in many of the letters presidents wrote at PWIs.

Twenty-six percent of PWI presidents had similar views as presidents at HBCUs. Several quoted Dr. King as well and cautioned America to listen. Additionally, some cautioned against equating property loss with the loss of life. As an illustration, one president wrote “There are those who wish to downplay the institutionally sanctioned violence against Black people by condemning these acts of protest. We cannot fall victim to this false equivalency”. As Dr. King noted in his speech, Other American, “Certain conditions continue to exist in our society, which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard”. Only one letter written by presidents at an Ivy League institution mentioned the protests. The president at Yale stated “Some of the protests have turned destructive, undermining the plea for justice all Americans must share”.

#### 4.1.6. Strong Commitment to Social Justice versus Cursory Reflections

Letters were coded as either solid commitments to social justice or cursory reactions, dancing around the margins and using vague language. Ninety-two percent (11/12) of the HBCU’s letters suggest a solid commitment to social justice expressed in the language used throughout the letters. Recall presidents from the HBCUs used vocabulary related to social justice more frequently in their letters than presidents at the other institutions. They were bold in their use of anti-blackness, anti-racist, anti-racism, and Black and racist/racism narratives. The use of these words was absent from the one HBCU letter that did not appear to have a strong commitment to social justice. This university is in Florida, which could have impacted how bold the president felt they could be in the letter, given that it is a public university in the South.

Additionally, HBCUs tend to have firm commitments to social justice and community engagement in their historical roots. Forty-three percent (3/7) of the Ivy League Institutions seemed to strongly commit to social justice, as determined by the language in their statements. For example, the statement written by Brown University states explicitly “we must continue to demand equity and justice for all people, inclusive of all identities”. The

statement also reminds readers of the resources available within the university that can be used to “interrogate the persistent and deeply disturbing issues related to race, racism and police violence in America”. It describes how the university will leverage resources to advance knowledge and effect change. Similarly, another wrote “We will address it directly in our educational programs, in our research and in our engagement and related activities...”. Seventy percent (30/43) of statements written by presidents at PWIs articulated a strong commitment to social justice work. For example, one president expressed that the university was exploring several actions to respond to the moment. Another informed the campus that they would soon be releasing a report from an investigation into university police arrests that illustrated how much work this university needed to do. Another president challenged the campus to “pursue your goals with an intentional effort to transform your community, the state, nation, and our globe into a more compassionate, equitable and understanding place”.

#### 4.1.7. Call to Action

Letters were evaluated to ascertain if a call to action was present. A call to action was defined as the president’s plan for moving the university forward. Letters were coded as either having a call to action if the president specifically articulated action items for the campus moving forward in addressing systemic racism and social injustice. Some calls to action were more detailed than others; however, the call to action is the purpose of the mission/vision statements and the evaluation of the strategic plans. All of the letters by HBCU presidents had a call to action. Although some were more detailed than others, they each expressed a commitment to work that would foster a more just society. For example, several presidents encouraged their campuses to register to vote, go vote, and get educated. As part of an HBCU response, the university president invited the Atlanta Police Department, “to forge a cooperative partnership that would have as its goal the protection and safety of all our citizens.” An example of a vague action plan is one that was missing the articulation of any specific instructions: “the university stands ready and willing to help in the fight for social justice. We can and must do better”. Although the president articulated a willingness to help, there did not seem to be a clear path or even a suggestion of actions the campus could take immediately. Eighty-six percent (6/7) of the statements written by presidents at Ivy League institutions had a call to action present. Two were more specific than the other four. Ninety-five percent (41/43) of the statements written by presidents at PWIs contained a call-to-action. Twelve of the calls to action seemed more detailed, with specific steps or strategies. The following analysis of the mission statements and strategic plans ascertained universities’ stated commitments to social justice. *In the following section, we detail the results of research question 2, to what degree are principles of social justice embedded in university intellectual roots and social responsibility?*

#### 4.1.8. Mission Statements Results

The mission statements for each university type were entered into Voyant Tools. This was carried out to identify the most frequently occurring words in the statements and determine if there were similarities and differences according to the university type. Next, we chose specific search terms related to aspects of university social responsibility to determine the frequency of the terms in the mission statements and if there were similarities across different institution types. Table 2 shows some variability in the five most frequently occurring words by university type. As expected, the word university appeared the most frequently across all three types of institutions.

“Students”, as expected, was the next highest frequently occurring word for the HBCUs and Ivy League institutions. However, for PWIs, the word “research” was the second most frequently occurring word in the list. The word service did not appear as one of the top five most frequently occurring words for PWIs or Ivy League institutions; however, it was one of the five most frequently occurring words in the HBCU mission statements.

**Table 2.** Frequency of relevant terms in mission statements by university type.

University Type	Most Frequently Occurring Words
HBCU (n = 12)	University—44
	Students—16
	Research—13
	Educational—11
	Service—11
PWI (n = 43)	University—104
	Research—46
	Students—45
	Community—31
	Education—31
Ivy League (n = 7)	University—15
	Students—10
	New—7
	World—7
	Research—6

Based on the research question, a further analysis was conducted using Voyant. We entered specific search terms to determine their frequency in the mission statements. Table 3 shows the variability. We examined how the terms were used within the mission statements to understand the data more clearly. Specifically, a deeper dive into the data revealed that it was the case that the frequent use of the word “community” in the mission statements of PWIs was because it was often used to reference the university community and not necessarily community engagement or service to the wider community in which the university exists. We then examined the mission statements more carefully to understand the findings and cross-check the mission statements with the university’s strategic plans.

**Table 3.** Frequency of relevant terms in mission statements.

	HBCU (n = 12)	PWI (n = 43)	Ivy League (n = 7)
Community engagement/community service/service to the community/serve the community/public service	4	7	2
Social Justice/socially responsible	0	3	0
Diverse/Diversity	11	29	3
Equity	0	2	0
Inclusion/inclusive	1	5	0
Underrepresented students	0	0	0
Diverse faculty	0	1	1
Diverse students	0	1	1

#### 4.1.9. Commitment to Community Engagement/Community Service

Seventy-seven percent (33/43) of the mission statements of PWIs included a sentence or sentences about community engagement or advancing the community in which the university was located. Additionally, many mission statements referenced contributing to their local communities and the state, national, and global communities. For example, Washington State University’s first sentence in the mission statement states “. . . scholarly inquiry that benefits society, and the sharing of expertise to positively impact the state and communities”. Seventy-five percent (9/12) of the HBCUs included community engagement in the mission statements. As an exemplar of this, one line in Hampton University’s mission statement reads “faculty, staff, and students provide leadership and service to the University as well as the global community”.

Similarly, 71% (5/7) of the mission statements of the Ivy League institutions referenced community engagement as an integral part of the university’s mission. The first phrase of Brown University’s mission statement demonstrates that serving the community is the purpose of the university’s existence. The beginning of the statement reads as follows: “the mission of Brown University is to serve the community, the nation, and the world by. . .”.

#### 4.1.10. Commitment to Students from Diverse Backgrounds

All (12/12) HBCUs' mission statements included language regarding the education of students from diverse backgrounds in their mission statements, and one specifically mentioned their "commitment to multiculturalism", being proud to serve students from diverse national, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Florida A&M University states that "while the University continues its historic mission of educating African Americans, FAMU embraces persons of all races, ethnic origins, and nationalities as life-long members of the University community". By contrast, there was no inclusion of educating students from diverse backgrounds within the mission statements of several PWIs or the Ivy League institutions. Specifically, 43% (3/7) of the Ivy League institutions and 26% (11/43) of the mission statements of PWIs included language regarding students from diverse backgrounds. An example from a PWI (Eastern Washington University), which expressed a commitment to students from diverse backgrounds, talked about "enhancing access to higher education in the Inland Northwest and beyond by recruiting and supporting traditional college-bound students, non-traditional students, and those from underserved populations". As an Ivy League institution, Columbia University's mission statement said "it seeks to attract a diverse and international faculty and student body, to support research and teaching on global issues and to create academic relationships with many countries and regions".

#### 4.1.11. Commitment to Social Justice

Seventy-five percent (9/12) of the mission statements of HBCUs included social justice principles. Morgan State University's mission statement reads in part "the University gives significant priority to addressing societal problems, particularly those prevalent in urban communities". Contained in the mission statement of Howard University is "... faculty who are, through their teaching, research and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates and the discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world". Similarly, 67% (29/43) of PWIs included principles of social justice within their mission statements. For example, the mission statement of Emerson College reads "This mission is informed by core liberal arts values that seek to promote civic engagement, encourage ethical practices, foster respect for human diversity, and inspire students to create and communicate with clarity, integrity, and conviction". Social justice was expressed somewhat similarly in the mission statement of Emory University, "... a commitment to use knowledge to improve human well-being; and a global perspective on the human condition". Gonzaga's statement reads somewhat differently as social justice is explicitly stated: "The Gonzaga experience fosters a mature commitment to dignity of the human person, social justice, diversity, intercultural competence, global engagement, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and care for the planet". In contrast, only 29% (2/7) of the Ivy League institutions' mission statements presented a commitment to social justice.

#### 4.1.12. Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

One hundred percent (12/12) of the mission statements of HBCUs reflected a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some examples of how this commitment was articulated in the mission statements of the HBCUs are "responsive to needs of a diverse student population" and, from Virginia Union University's statement, "Virginia Union University is nourished by its African American heritage and energized by commitment to excellence and diversity". A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion was not as evident in the mission statements of the PWIs and Ivy League institutions: 60% (26/43) and 57% (4/7), respectively.

#### 4.1.13. Strategic Plans Results

The strategic plans of the 60 universities were evaluated to further explore how social justice was embedded into the intellectual roots of the universities. The strategic plans of two universities (one HBCU and one Ivy League Institution) were not accessible. For these

universities, we evaluated the vision statements, the core values of the institution and explored their university websites to further understand how university social responsibility was embedded in the intellectual roots of the universities.

#### 4.1.14. Commitment to Community Engagement/Community Service

All PWIs and the Ivy League institutions demonstrated a commitment to community engagement in their strategic plans. Although one Ivy League strategic plan was not accessible, this commitment was evident in the vision and core values of the institution. Commitments were expressed at varying degrees, but were present for all 50 institutions. For example, The University of Virginia's included "making UVA synonymous with service" as a goal, while Princeton University has a specific center devoted to civic engagement. Ninety-two percent (11/12) of the HBCUs expressed a commitment to community engagement.

This was expressed in strategic priorities such as producing research that would benefit the state, nation, and the world. The absence of this commitment was evident only in the one institution whose strategic plan was not available. Neither the vision nor the core values expressed a commitment to community engagement.

#### 4.1.15. Commitment to Students from Diverse Backgrounds

All the Ivy League institutions demonstrated a commitment to students from diverse backgrounds and 91% (39/43) of PWIs were committed to students from diverse backgrounds based on goals written in their strategic plans. An exemplar of this is Duke University's Diversity and Excellence Initiative, which included a sub-section for student support. To support students from diverse backgrounds, "anti-racism is woven into our curricula and university programs so that no Duke student will leave without a firm understanding of the societal problems of structural racism, social injustice, and inequality". Eighty-three percent (10/12) of the HBCUs demonstrated commitment to students from diverse backgrounds within their strategic plans. Although one university did not have a specific initiative targeting students from diverse backgrounds, there were initiatives devoted to improving student success by improving graduation rates with a particular focus on sub-group performance. One example of a specific goal that demonstrates this principle of social justice included enhancing doctoral achievement in STEM fields and non-STEM disciplines for under-represented students of color. Another example of a goal demonstrating this commitment was to develop articulation agreements with community colleges. One metric used to determine if this was meeting the goal of increasing the number of diverse students was the African American transfers headcount. Another example was the inclusion of goals related to financial and good education to minimize student debt.

#### 4.1.16. Commitment to Social Justice

The results suggest that all of the Ivy League institutions were deemed to have a responsibility for social justice, and many had centers allocated for this work. For example, Brown University has the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America. Princeton houses the Field Center for Equality and Cultural Understanding. Each of these centers' primary focus is related to advancing equality for marginalized communities and educating the university community about ways to advance and promote a just society. Ninety-five percent of PWIs have language in their strategic plans that suggest a commitment to social justice. For some institutions, social justice was woven into the fabric of each goal that that was written. As seen with the Ivy League institutions, PWIs also housed specific centers whose work focuses on social justice.

For example, Binghamton University includes The Institute for Justice and Well-Being, an interdisciplinary research institute that advances global health, progressive education, and well-being for marginalized populations. The institute's goal is to develop and disseminate work that leads to the elimination of oppression and injustice. Similarly,



Boston University houses the Center for Anti-racist Research, representing collaborative research and education involving interdisciplinary work to enhance racial equity and social justice. Ninety-two percent (11/12) of the HBCUs expressed a commitment to social justice. For the HBCUs, social justice was articulated as many times as access to education.

Additionally, as part of the goals for this commitment, there was one instance in which an HBCU had a goal to establish a Center for Social Justice. The centers devoted to social justice work were less evident for the HBCUs. Part of Spelman College's commitment to social justice includes the Social Justice Fellows Program. The program provides opportunities for students to receive social justice advocacy training, social justice advocacy, and policy implementation experiences.

#### 4.1.17. Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

The results suggest that all Ivy League institutions and 95% (41/43) of PWIs had language in their strategic plans that demonstrated a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ninety-two percent (11/12) of the HBCUs expressed a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many of the universities had initiatives to recruit and retain diverse faculty, students, and staff. There were also goals of inclusive pedagogy to promote the engagement of all students. Other institutions highlighted the importance of creating university-wide research programs that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion as an integrated interdisciplinary approach. A reoccurring idea evident in these universities' strategic plans included ensuring that all students had the right to inclusion and respect, and that everyone's voices were heard. Many also had initiatives to recruit and support diverse faculty through cluster hires, professional development, and research support.

#### 4.1.18. Similar Stories across Different Data Sources

**Commitment to Social Justice:** Presidents' commitment to social justice in their letters ranged from 43 to 92%. However, the commitment to social justice seen in the mission statements ranged from 29 to 75%, and in the strategic plans it ranged from 92 to 100%. **Acknowledgment of systemic racism/racial inequalities:** In the presidents' letters, across each type of university, the acknowledgment of systemic racism/racial inequalities was high, ranging from 88 to 100%. This acknowledgment is further supported by the high percentages of commitment to social justice and DEI in the mission statements and strategic plans.

#### 4.1.19. Call to Action and Dehumanization of Black People

A high percentage of letters across university types expressed a call to action. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, 58 letters contained language that the murder of George Floyd was a result of the dehumanization of Black people, reflecting a sense of urgency to educate and eradicate racism. Across university types, there was a commitment to DEI and social justice reflected in their mission statements and the strategic plans (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Comparison of themes in letters to results from mission statements and strategic plans.

Type of Institution	Letters Suggest Strong Commitment to Social Justice	Letters Acknowledge Systemic Racism/Racial Inequalities	Letters Suggest Call to Action	Letters Suggest Dehumanization of Black People	Mission Statement Strong Commitment to Social Justice	Strategic Plans Strong Commitment to Social Justice
HBCUs	92%	100%	100%	100%	75%	92%
Ivy Leagues	43%	100%	86%	100%	29%	100%
PWI	70%	88%	95%	91%	67%	95%

## 5. Conclusions

In the wake of the collective trauma associated with the murder of George Floyd, we analyzed university presidents' implicit and explicit social justice responses to his death and the ensuing unwavering protests. There was widespread response across academia as institutions grappled with collective and cultural traumas. An important implication of our work is the broad array in terms of the depth and forthrightness of responses by university presidents across university types. Presidential letters disclose their institutions' priorities, organizational identities, and social responsibility convictions. Although the presidential letters were written to denounce social inequities, few were direct in using terms such as Black, African American, systemic racism, and police brutality. In this current climate, marginalized students, faculty, and staff are astute. They contemplate institutional statements and reactions; words matter. If we want them to feel supported and know that they belong, in this case, university leaders must be courageous in condemning the dehumanization of people of color, systemic racism, and racial disparities (see Table 4).

The CDA analytical tool was used to understand institutional responses in terms of underlying assumptions about the dehumanization of Black and Brown people, structural racism, diversity, depth of reactions, and calls to action. Isolated themes from presidents' letters were addressed with varying levels of commitment. Language provides access to thoughts and fundamental beliefs. Thus, administrators' lexical choices should explicitly denounce inequities, structural racism, and police brutality for efficacy. Universities must mirror this behavior to help stakeholders understand how to advocate and be bold. A proactive and bold condemnation of social atrocities empowers students, faculty, staff, and communities to engage in the fight for justice. Presidential reactions, statements, and words matter as they stimulate a collective sense of efficacy and social responsibility, signaling social contact, community-building, the creation of avenues to mitigate inequality, and the breaking down of longstanding institutional barriers.

Universities that presented a bold thrust to tackle systemic racism head-on in their strategic plans should be pegged with a practical system to re-engineer racialized organizational identities, practices, structures, and procedures. Building trust and high-quality interactions in unequal spaces does not automatically and organically unfold. Thus, bridge-building mechanisms, prosocial behaviors, and community creation need specific attention: prosocial behaviors and self-reflexivity are key pathways.

As university leadership continues to create solutions, we consider the words of Emerson College's president: "This is not a black problem, but a structural issue built on white supremacy and centuries of racism. It's your problem. And until you understand that, we are doomed to relive this week's tragic events over and over again. What changes will you make in your own life? Begin with answering that question, and maybe, just maybe we will get somewhere". For universities to be the agents of change they should be in society, we paraphrase the words of Lee University's president: the problem of racial equality and social justice needs to move up in our ordering of personal and institutional priorities.

History has shown that positive change can emerge from collective trauma (Poulin et al. 2009). The murder of George Floyd generated both individual and collective trauma, and the widespread emotions, reactions, and intellectual interpretations led to the collective opportunity to address longstanding systemic racism and structural inequality in academia.

University presidents' public statements in response to George Floyd's death and the idealistic protests of 2020 indicate varying levels of commitment to social justice and challenging systemic racism. All advocated support for those individuals and collectives traumatized by the murder. Some have strong social justice and anti-racist narratives in their mission statements and strategic plans, offering firm institutional commitments to challenging inequality and injustice. Others have vague connections to social justice as university imperatives, but they articulated their support for those at the forefront of racial disparities. In contrast, others overlooked the tenet of social justice as USR and have weak

institutional links to these ideas as institutional transforming forces; many did not refer to substantive and blueprint approaches for effecting change.

Our findings show that administrators from numerous universities convened and participated in the discourse on structural racism in higher education. Many acknowledged the need for structural change and signaled an explicit commitment to flexible accommodations. In general, they expressed solidarity for Black and Brown students, faculty, staff, and institutional commitment to diversity. However, some PWIs and Ivy League universities demonstrated a lack of awareness of the lived experiences of Black and Brown people regarding police brutality and structural racism.

Nevertheless, many called for racial equity and justice, equality, respect for human dignity, and inclusion. Others called for meaningful and long-lasting social change. All this was necessary, but it is not enough. There seems to be a correlation between statements in which presidents were bold in denouncing systemic racism and invoking the principles of social justice embedded in the university intellectual roots. Some firmly stated that the time to be silent is no more and are strong in their language for action. However, expressions of empathy, compassion, impassioned discourses, and conscience-stroking narratives can be ineffective. They do not necessarily advance a sense of justice and prosocial behaviors or address structural pillars necessary to dismantle racism, inequalities, and injustices. Action is the substratum of social justice and university social responsibility.

While there is no well-ordered symmetry between presidential narratives and institutional action, we are eager to see social responsibility as a core institutional value more broadly embedded in universities' visions, missions, and goals, with defined social justice awareness and action performance indicators. We are heartened that social justice and levels of USR endeavors are already present in several universities' missions and strategic plans. We note that just institutions are about doing right things in practical and impactful ways. We envision university milieus promoting a fair and just society responsibility among all stakeholders. We argue for justice-based action in teaching curricula, research plans, service-learning portfolios, and community engagement. Universities possess the tools and influence to develop a social justice consciousness in their service regions effectively. Future students deserve ideological, intellectual, and practical mechanisms for contributing to a just society and effecting just leadership. We call for a future where social justice is central to university identity, intellectual property, material resources, and brand.

We posit that university stakeholders' expressions of outrage and anguish over police brute force is USR. Pioneering meaningful and reciprocal social justice actions on campus, locally, nationally, and globally is USR. Anti-racist curricula and pedagogy are a form of USR. Interdisciplinary grounding in social justice is a form of USR. Equipping students with the tools to dissect, understand, and address structural inequality is USR. An anti-racist university platform is USR. Understanding the impact of inequality on broader social problems is USR. Shared concern about injustice and inequality within university milieus and wider communities is USR. Revamping university goals and values to include social justice is USR. Designating the university as a leader in social justice work, empowering students, engaging in their communities, progressing equality, and engendering a better society is USR. A socially responsible university fosters prosocial perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, practices, and social innovation and activities that improve the quality of place and engender a just and equitable society.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; methodology, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; software, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; validation, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; formal analysis, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; investigation, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; resources, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; data curation, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; writing, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; visualization, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; supervision, P.A.M. and L.R.M.; project administration, P.A.M. and L.R.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Sample of Universities by Type.

	Type	Control	Name
1. Adler University	Other health professions schools	Private PWI	Illinois
2. Alabama A&M University	Master's College and University	Public HBCU	Alabama
3. Alabama State University	Master's College and University	Public HBCU	Alabama
4. Baylor University	Research University	Private PWI	Texas
5. Benedict College	Liberal Arts College	Private HBCU	South Carolina
6. Binghamton University	Research University	Public PWI	New York
7. Boston University	Research University	Private PWI	Massachusetts
8. Brown University	Research University	Private PWI	Rhode Island
9. Columbia University	Research University	Private PWI	New York
10. Cornell University	Research University	Private PWI	New York
11. Delaware State University	Research University	Public HBCU	Delaware
12. San Joaquin Delta College	Community College	Public PWI	California
13. Duke University	Research University	Private PWI	North Carolina
14. Eastern Mennonite University	Liberal Arts	Private PWI	Virginia
15. Eastern Washington University	Master's College and University	Public PWI	Washington
16. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	Master's college and University	Private PWI	Florida
17. Emerson College			
18. Emory University	Master's College and University	Private PWI	Massachusetts
19. Florida A&M University	Research University	Private PWI	Georgia
20. Fresno State University	Research University	Public HBCU	Florida
21. Gonzaga University	Doctoral/Professional University	Public PWI	California
22. Hampton University	Doctoral/Professional University	Private PWI	Washington
23. Harvard University	Research University	Private HBCU	Virginia
24. Howard University	Research University	Private PWI	Massachusetts
25. Lamar University	Research University	Private HBCU	DC
26. Lee University	Doctoral/Professional University	Public PWI	Texas
27. Medaille College	Master's College and University	Private PWI	Tennessee
28. Michigan State University	Master's College and University	Private PWI	New York
29. Minnesota State University, Mankato	Research University	Public PWI	Michigan
30. Mississippi State University	Master's college and university	Public PWI	Minnesota
31. Montgomery College			
32. Morgan State University	Research University	Public PWI	Mississippi
33. Penn State University	Associate's College	Public PWI	Maryland
34. Princeton University	Research University	Public HBCU	Maryland
35. Queens College	Research University	Public PWI	Pennsylvania
36. Robert Morris University	Research University	Private PWI	New Jersey
37. Seton Hall University	Master's College and University	Public PWI	New York
38. Shaw University	Doctoral/Professional University	Private PWI	Pennsylvania
39. Shenandoah University	Research University	Private PWI	New Jersey
40. Spelman College	Liberal Arts	Private HBCU	North Carolina
41. Stony Brook University	Doctoral/Professional University	Private PWI	Virginia
42. Towson University	Liberal Arts	Private HBCU	Georgia
43. University of Arkansas-Fayetteville	Research University	Public PWI	New York
44. University of Arkansas-Fort Smith	Doctoral/Professional University	Public PWI	Maryland
45. University of California	Research University	Public PWI	Arkansas
46. University of Evansville			

Table A1. Cont.

	Type	Control	Name
47. University of Louisiana at Lafayette	Liberal Arts	Public PWI	Arkansas
48. University of Maine			
49. University of Maryland-Baltimore	Research University	Public PWI	California
50. University of Mississippi	Master's College and University	Private PWI	Indiana
51. University of Missouri	Research University	Public PWI	Louisiana
52. University of Minnesota			
53. University of Pennsylvania	Research University	Public PWI	Maine
54. University of Pittsburgh	Special Focus Four Year	Public PWI	Maryland
55. University of South Florida			
56. University of Southern Indiana	Research University	Public PWI	Mississippi
57. University of St. Thomas	Research University	Public PWI	Missouri
58. University of Virginia	Research University	Public PWI	Minnesota
59. Virginia Union University	Research University	Public PWI	Pennsylvania
60. Virginia State University	Research University	Public PWI	Pennsylvania
61. Washington State University	Research University	Public PWI	Tampa
62. Yale University	Master's College and University	Public PWI	Indiana
	Doctoral/Professional University	Private PWI	Minnesota
	Research University	Public PWI	Virginia
	Liberal Arts	Private HBCU	Virginia
	Master's College and University	Public HBCU	Virginia
	Research University	Public PWI	Washington
	Research University	Private	Connecticut

## References

- Alexander, Jeffrey. 2004. Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma. In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Edited by Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil Smelser and Piotr Sztompka. Berkeley: California University Press, pp. 1–30.
- Campus Compact. 2021. Higher Education Responds to Katrina. Available online: <http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/downloads/Katrina.pdf> (accessed on 7 February 2022).
- Capeheart, Loretta, and Dragan Milovanovic. 2020. *Social Justice: Theories, Issues, and Movements*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Clegg, Stewart R., Carl Rhodes, and Martin Kornberger. 2007. Desperately seeking legitimacy: Organizational identity and emerging industries. *Organization Studies* 28: 495–513. [CrossRef]
- Collins, Patricia Hill, Elaini Cristina Gonzaga da Silva, Emek Ergun, Inger Furseth, Kanisha D. Bond, and Jone Martínez-Palacios. 2021. Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory. *Contemporary Political Theory* 20: 690–725. Available online: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s41296-021-00490-0.pdf> (accessed on 7 December 2021).
- Eyerman, Ron. 2019. Social theory and cultural trauma. *Memory, Trauma, and Identity*, 89–110. [CrossRef]
- Goffman, Erving. 1983. *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press.
- Golafshani, Nahid. 2003. Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report* 8: 597–606. [CrossRef]
- H.R. 1280, 117th Congress: George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021. 2021. Available online: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/117/hr1280> (accessed on 29 December 2021).
- Hart, C. 2013. Event-construal in press reports of violence in two recent political protests: A cognitive linguistic approach to CDA. *Journal of Language and Politics* 12: 400–23. [CrossRef]
- Khanjar, N. 2020. Hurricane Katrina: Analyzing the Damage and Environmental Injustices Fifteen Years Later. Medium. Available online: <https://ceejh.medium.com/hurricane-katrina-analyzing-the-damage-and-environmental-injustices-fifteen-years-later-cc3f18820051> (accessed on 9 February 2022).
- Markowitz, David M., and Paul Slovic. 2020. Social, psychological, and demographic characteristics of dehumanization toward immigrants. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 117: 9260–69. [CrossRef]
- Meikle, Paulette Ann. 2020. The right to breathe: A sociological commentary on racialized injustice, borders and violence. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal* 39: 793–801. [CrossRef]
- Meikle, P., and L. Morris. 2022. Social Justice as a Dimension of University Social Responsibility and Socially Responsible Practitioners. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*. under review.
- Mullet, Dianna R. 2018. A general critical discourse analysis framework for educational research. *Journal of Advanced Academics* 29: 116–42. [CrossRef]
- NCSL. 2021. National Conference of State Legislatures. Law Enforcement Statutory Database. Available online: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/law-enforcement-statutory-database.aspx> (accessed on 2 November 2021).

- Parker, Kim, Juliana Horowitz, and Monica Anderson. 2020. Amid Protests, Majorities across Racial and Ethnic Groups Express Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement. Pew Research Center. Available online: [file:///C:/Users/pmeikle/Downloads/PSDT\\_06.12.20\\_protest\\_fullreport.pdf](file:///C:/Users/pmeikle/Downloads/PSDT_06.12.20_protest_fullreport.pdf) (accessed on 29 December 2021).
- Patton, Michael Quinn. 1999. Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Serv Research* 34: 1189–208.
- Poulin, Michael J., Roxane Cohen Silver, Virginia Gil-Rivas, E. Alison Holman, and Daniel N. McIntosh. 2009. Finding social benefits after a collective trauma: Perceiving societal changes and well-being following 9/11. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 22: 81–90. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Rababah, Abedalqader, Natalya I. Nikitina, Veronica M. Grebennikova, Zhanna R. Gardanova, Angelina O. Zekiy, Vadim V. Ponkratov, and Nadezhda N. Bashkirova. 2021. University social responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic: Universities' case in the BRICS countries. *Sustainability* 13: 7035. [CrossRef]
- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: The Belknap of Harvard University Press.
- Rogers, Rebecca, Elizabeth Malancharuvil-Berkes, Melissa Mosley, Diane Hui, and Glynis O'Garro Joseph. 2005. Critical discourse analysis in education: A Review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research* 75: 365–416. [CrossRef]
- Schwartz, K. 2020. Crisis and Adaptation for the Public Good. Stanford Innovation Review. Available online: [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/crisis\\_and\\_adaptation\\_for\\_the\\_public\\_good](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/crisis_and_adaptation_for_the_public_good) (accessed on 6 October 2021).
- Sengupta, E., P. Blessinger, and C. Mahoney. 2020. Introduction to civil society and Social Responsibility in higher education: International Perspectives on University–Community Partnerships. *Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning*, 3–14. [CrossRef]
- Spradley, James P. 1980. *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Stensaker, Bjørn. 2014. Organizational identity as a concept for understanding university dynamics. *Higher Education* 69: 103–15. [CrossRef]
- Vallaes, François. 2013. Defining Social Responsibility: A Matter of Philosophical Urgency for University. Global University Network for Innovation. Available online: <http://www.guninetwork.org/articles/defining-socialresponsibility-matter-philosophical-urgency-universities> (accessed on 16 July 2021).
- Vásquez, L. M., B. M. Alequin, and J. C. Vadi. 2014. University Social Responsibility: A social transformation of learning, teaching, research, and innovation. Paper presented at the 9th Quest for Global Competitiveness Conference, San Juan, PR, USA, March 13–14. Available online: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305400973\\_University\\_Social\\_Responsibility\\_A\\_Social\\_Transformation\\_of\\_Learning](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305400973_University_Social_Responsibility_A_Social_Transformation_of_Learning) (accessed on 16 July 2021).
- Yu, Betty, RaMonda Horton, Benjamin Munson, Brandi L. Newkirk-Turner, Valerie E. Johnson, Reem Khamis-Dakwar, Maria L. Muñoz, and Yvette D. Hyter. 2021. Making race visible in speech, language, and hearing sciences: A critical discourse analysis. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 1–23. Available online: [https://pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/2021\\_AJSLP-20-00384](https://pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/2021_AJSLP-20-00384) (accessed on 18 November 2021).