"I JUST SAW SOMEONE DIE OMFG":

Multimodal representations of the shooting of Michael Brown on Tumblr

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämän tutkielman aiheena on tutkia suosiotaan kasvattavan sosiaalisen median sivuston Tumblrin rakentamia representaatioita postauksissa, jotka jatkuvasti käsittelivät tavalla tai toisella Yhdysvalloissa, Fergusonin kaupungissa elokuussa 2014 tapahtunutta poliisin ja tummaihoisen nuoren miehen, Michael Brownin, välistä yhteenottoa jossa Brown sai surmansa. Ampumatapaus ja sitä seuranneet mielenosoitukset saivat huomiota sekä perinteisessä että sosiaalisessa mediassa.

Tutkielmani tarkoitus on selvittää kuinka kyseiseen ampumatapaukseen liittyvissä postauksissa Tumblrissa tapausta representoitiin, eli millaisia merkityksiä siitä rakennettiin multimodaalisin eli monikanavaisin keinoin. Aineistoni koostui viidestäkymmenestä (50) postauksesta, jotka käsittelivät joko itse ampuma-tapausta tai siitä seuranneita mielenosoituksia. Päätutkimuskysymykseni on miten Brownin ampumista representoidaan multimodaalisin keinoin Tumblrissa. Lisäkysymyksieni avulla pohdin myös millaisia merkityksiä multimodaalisin keinoin rakennetaan, sekä millaisia funktioita eri moodeilla on, sekä yhdessä että erikseen.

Aineistoni sisälsi kolmea erilaista moodia: tekstiä, kuvaa ja liikkuvaa kuvaa, joita erikseen tai yhdessä käyttämällä postaukset rakensivat merkityksiä ampumatapauksesta, mielenosoituksista ja Brownista itsestään. Moodien eri mahdollisuudet luoda merkityksiä, esimerkiksi kuvien kyky nostattaa tunteita tai luoda henkilökohtaista sosiaalista läheisyyttä kuvattavan ja katsojan välillä, yhdistyivät toisiinsa luoden monitahoisia merkityskokonaisuuksia, joissa eri moodit toimivat yhdessä tukien ja laajentaen niistä esiin nousevia representaatioita.

Tutkielmani osoitti, että multimodaalisuus on olennaisesti läsnä sekä aineistossani että Tumblrissa yleensä. Postaukset, jotka yhdistelivät useita moodeja sekä sisälsivät useiden eri käyttäjien tuottamia sisältöjä toimivat monin eri tavoin. Tekstit sisälsivät mm. kommentteja, henkilökohtaisia tunne-reaktioita ja lisätietoa. Liikkuvan kuvan avulla käyttäjät pystyivät kuvaamaan reaktioitaan sanallisen muodon sijasta kuvallisesti, ja kuvien avulla pystyttiin esim. asettamaan katsojat ulkopuolisen, objektiivisen tarkkailijan rooliin tai puhuttelemaan katsojia, tarkoituksena herättää tunnereaktioita tai yhdistää ampumatapaus uusiin konteksteihin, mm. tarjoamalla Brownin kuolemaan hänen perheensä näkö-kulma.

Eri moodien yhteiskäyttö mahdollisti monien erilaisten representaatioiden rakentamisen, joiden avulla ampumatapausta sekä laajempia aiheita kuten rasisimia tarkasteltiin ja representoitiin moninaisista näkö-kulmista. Vähäinen aiempi tutkimus Tumblrista ja etenkin sen multimodaalisista postauksista sekä tavoista joilla merkitykset rakentuvat syntyi tutkimuksen ansiosta uutta tietoa, joka tarjoaa uusia havaintoja siitä millaisin eri keinoin sosiaalisen media sisältöjä tuotetaan, sekä miten niiden merkityksiä aktiivisesti rakennetaan eri postauksissa, sekä yksittäisten että useiden käyttäjien toimesta.

Asiasanat – Keywords sosiaalinen media, tumblr, multimodaalisuus, representaatio

Säilytyspaikka – Depository Kielten laitos

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites have quickly become globally popular communication tools. Various social networking sites enable their users to form personal networks despite their across time and geographical location. According to Lenhart et al. (2010), in 2010 73 per cent of American teen and 48 per cent of adult Internet users were also using social networking sites. Even though social networking sites all have unique functions, they share a main task: enabling users to construct personal networks, and produce and share information to those networks. Social networking sites can be seen to be a part of a new, post-modern way of communicating, since they have replaced many modern technological communication methods, such as phone calls and even emails. As a result, sharing information about one's life has become more widespread and even public as social networking site users are able to share their life events to global online audiences.

A relatively new addition to the collection of social networking sites is Tumblr, a microblogging service founded in 2007 by David Karp. Tumblr allows its users to "post text, photos, quotes, links, music, and videos from your browser, phone, desktop, email or wherever you happen to be" (tumblr.com/about). Microblogging sites such as Tumblr and Twitter[1] enable users to post predominantly concise content onto their own profiles or blogs and share it with other users. While microblogging sites have gained more users, the amount of content on these sites has grown considerably, continuing to do so.

During recent years, Tumblr has become a site utilized for distributing information. As world events, crises or political and social issues have gained attention on traditional media, e.g. newspapers, Tumblr has gained an active role in distributing alternative or additional information on the same topics. At times, Tumblr posts have aimed to challenge the information provided by traditional media.

A fairly recent controversial topic, which has attracted media attention and incited public discussion particularly in the US, is police brutality. Several incidents involving black

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[1] These social networking sites as well as their significance for the present study will be introduced more thoroughly in section 2.2

Americans being killed by white police officers have gained attention both on traditional media and on social networking sites. On Tumblr such incidents have been discussed and investigated while the information distributed by traditional media has been viewed as biased or insufficient. As a result, Tumblr has gained a role of providing alternative information on current events, giving the public a chance to voice their opinions.

In August 2014 an 18-year-old black man, Michael Brown, was shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The shooting was soon followed by the local community's outrage, which resulted in protests against police brutality and racism. While traditional media such as TV news reports and newspapers utilized police press releases to find and share information about the shooting and the protests following the shooting, Tumblr users labeled that information as biased or untrue. Consequently, Tumblr users shared alternative information from unofficial sources, rumors, eyewitness accounts and social media posts.

Tumblr's interface, which enables users to utilize text, images, audio and video in constructing posts, resulted in the creation of posts where written comments or observations were supported by images, videos or audio clips. Some of these posts intended to correct misinformation the authors felt was being circulated by journalists in relation to Brown's death. Exploring these aspects of multimodal, information distribution on Tumblr as a challenger for traditional media act as motivation for the present study's aim of exploring Tumblr, particularly in relation to the shooting of Michael Brown.

Selecting Tumblr posts involving the shooting of Michael Brown as the topic of the present study was also supported by other factors. First, discussing the shooting collaboratively and creatively by constructing Tumblr posts containing multiple modes (e.g. text, images, moving images) was found as a topic worth exploring, as it has not been researched before. This gap in previous research further supported selecting this particular topic for the present study. Second, the shooting of Michael Brown was a current topic during the time the topic of the present study was being formulated. This resulted in the large number of Tumblr posts discussing the shooting, providing the present study with ample data.

The main aim of the present study is to

explore the way Tumblr users produce multimodal, collaborative posts discussing the shooting of Michael Brown, and to examine the multimodal representations that arise from such posts.

As a result, my main research question is:

how is the shooting of Michael Brown multimodally represented on Tumblr?

Section 4.1 provides some additional aims for the present study as well as two sub-questions supporting the main research question presented above, and they will be introduced in more detail in that section.

As mentioned above, Tumblr as a research topic has only emerged quite recently and in a small scale. Some of these pieces of research have, for example, introduced Tumblr as a social networking site (Chang et al. 2014), examined Tumblr and its collective fan culture (Hillman, Procyk and Neustaedter 2014) and observed the behavioral patterns of Tumblr users (Xu et al. 2014). These research projects have all aided in adding Tumblr into the academic consciousness. Even though any research on this social networking site provides valuable new information, a lack on examining the concrete meaning-making tools of Tumblr posts remains somewhat overlooked. Multimodality on Tumblr has been examined by Bourlai and Herring (2014), who researched the combinations of text and images in conveying sentiment. Research such as this provides new information on the multimodal posts Tumblr users use to communicate their emotions, but a broader view on the other possible communicative opportunities of utilizing multimodality and creating various representations have been overlooked.

Despite the lack of previous research concerning Tumblr from the particular perspective of multimodal representations, previous research is utilized in my thesis. Three key fields in particular provide background knowledge to guide my observations and also aid in formulating my methods of analysis. These three fields are introduced briefly below, and in more detail in section 3.

The first field of research closely related to the themes and topics at hand is **media discourse analysis** (MDA)**.** According to Matheson (2005: 1), analyzing media discourses allows people to describe and evaluate in a careful manner how meanings are shared in the media. Matheson (ibid.) adds that media discourse analysis

> "analyses which representations of the social world redominate. It analyses what kinds of interactions media texts set up between people and the world and between the powerful and the rest. And it analyses how meaning is made differently in different media texts, and therefore what different ways of seeing and thinking tend to be found there."

By this definition, the aims of MDA correspond with the aims of the present study. In other words, the objectives of MDA to examine interactions between texts and the surrounding world, as well as the different meanings that are made in those texts are in the focus of the present study as well.

Because media discourse analysis commonly focuses on media texts appearing on traditional mass media (such as TV news reports or newspaper articles), the field of **computer mediated discourse analysis** (CMDA) is also utilized. CMDA enables the analysis of online material, e.g. a social networking sites. As a result, the relevant elements from both MDA and CMDA are extracted to enable analyzing the meanings made by Tumblr posts in particular.

The final field contributing to the present study is **multimodal analysis.** Multimodal analysis enables exploring the various modes with which meanings are constructed simultaneously. By definition, multimodality is the co-presence of several different modes (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001: 111), wherein modes are understood as "a socially and culturally shaped means of representing meaning in communication" (Collister 2013: 43). Since Tumblr posts can contain several modes in one post, examining each mode in relation to the meanings it produces enables exploring multimodality, the simultaneous use of multiple modes.

The contents of the preset study are as follows: chapter 2 introduces in more detail the contextual background of the study, whereas chapter 3 focuses on introducing the theoretical concepts utilized in the present study. In chapter 4 the setup of the present study is presented, which provides a more detailed account on the research questions,

aims, the data selection and collection process and concrete methods of analysis. Chapter 5 presents the body of analysis divided into subsections. First, an overview on the modes present in my data is provided, after which the analysis is divided into subsections, all of which focus on multimodal representations from the perspective of a certain phenomena or a certain example. Finally, chapter 6 includes a concluding discussion where the main findings of the present study will be presented, alongside evaluation as well as implications and applications for future research and other potential audiences.

2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

In this section, the contextual background of the present study will be introduced. Such key concepts as social media, Tumblr, police brutality and the shooting of Michael Brown, will be all introduced below in their own sections.

2.1 Social media and social networking sites

Social media has become a significant part of the beginning of the 21st century. Social media contains various sites, all of which provide numerous tools with which to communicate, which makes defining social media in a way that encompasses all those various activities a complex task.

Social media has been defined by Leppänen et al. (2014: 115) as "online environments which enable social interaction", which can occur in an ephemeral (short-term) or asynchronous (of a longer duration) manner. This definition encompasses both social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, and also other media of social online communication, such as discussion forums or writing and sharing fan fiction. Both enable Internet users to actively interact with one another in a productive way, but do not fall under the category of social networking sites, which focus more on individual users' personal profiles and networks.

In comparison, social media has also been defined in a different manner. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) elaborate that the term references "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." This definition further emphasizes the broad nature of social media and its capability to incorporate various sites and platforms, all of which allow users to craft and share posts. Additionally, social media often engage in the redistribution of pre-existing content. Previously crafted posts are redistributed, and sometimes they are adjusted by adding further elements to accompany the pre-existing content. Such processes are called entextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990), which Leppänen et al. (2014: 218) define as "the trajectories and re-uses of language

and textual material as resources in meaning making." The term provides a method of describing how textual material is utilized repeatedly in different contexts, resulting in the creation of new meanings. As text is extracted from other social networking sites, news reports or popular culture, its redistribution within a new context provides those textual elements with additional meanings.

Social networking sites can be seen as a subcategory of social media, requiring a separate definition. Similarly to social media, the various functions of social networking sites hinder providing an all-encompassing general definition; however some definitions do exist. One is provided by Lenhart and Madden (2007: 1), who describe social networking sites as "an online place where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects him or her to other users." This definition describes some of the key functions of social networking sites, such as creating a personal profile and constructing a personal network with other users. boyd and Ellison (2007: 211), provide another definition which elaborates on the way these sites function, by adding that profiles on social networking sites are not always public, and some information might only be shared between specific users should they choose to do so. Additionally, boyd and Ellison (ibid.) elaborate that social networking sites allow users to view and compare connections between their own profile and other users, based on the information their profiles contain.

Based on these definitions, social networking sites can be seen to differ from social media. Social networking sites often function around individual users' profiles, while on some social media sites (such as discussion forums) providing personal information and forming a network around your personal profile is not necessary, but more emphasis is placed on sharing user generated content. For the purposes of the present study the term "social networking sites" will be utilized, since the data, as well as other contextualizing examples, are extracted from sites which are constructed around personal profiles and networks, i.e. social networking sites. The broader term "social media" can be seen as an umbrella term incorporating social networking sites and other online environments, but they are not the focus of the present study.

2.2 Tumblr - what, how and why?

During recent years, Tumblr has grown from a small-scale social networking site into a large online community. Tumblr and its increasing popularity have been explored on traditional media as well, for example Forbes (a leading American business magazine) described its users as

> "a young, bright and tech-savvy group of international users who seek what might seem counterintuitive: Genuine online connection bolstered, not hindered, by anonymity." (Savitz 2013).

The Guardian, on the other hand, reported that Tumblr enables "creativity to explode, making it very easy for readers and publishers to discover real talent and energy there" (Flood 2014). Tumblr's functions and qualities, which may have inspired journalists to describe it as a site for creative, young users, are introduced in more detail below.

As of September 2015, Tumblr contains over 253 million blogs and 120 billion individual posts while over 60 million new posts are created daily (tumblr.com/about). The substantial amount of material can be seen as a manifestation of Tumblr's popularity, a view which was reinforced when Yahoo! (a large, multinational technology company) purchased Tumblr on 20 May 2012 for 1.1 billion dollars.

The increase in Tumblr's popularity can also be viewed statistically. According to Business Insider (a popular and active technology and business related online news outlet), in 2012 Tumblr's monthly user rates grew from approximately 65 million in January to approximately 90 million in December (Shontell 2012). A survey conducted by the Global Web Index in 2014 found Tumblr to be one of the fastest growing social networking sites as its number of active users increased by 120 per cent in 2014 alone.

The purpose of Tumblr could be seen as a multifaceted combination of goals users themselves define. Some merely use Tumblr to follow other users' Tumblr blogs without contributing to posts themselves, some run an active blog where they post original content regularly, whereas many merely redistribute pre-existing posts onto their own blogs without posting any original content. Tumblr's community guidelines highlight the

company's views on the functions of the site: "Tumblr celebrates creativity. We want you to express yourself freely and use Tumblr to reflect who you are, and what you love, think, and stand for". The guidelines add that "as a global platform for creativity and self-expression, Tumblr is deeply committed to supporting and protecting freedom of speech". (tumblr.com/policy/en/community) In other words, the site intends to function as a platform for producing and distributing creative material, enabling users to express themselves while supporting freedom of speech.

Since Tumblr has opted to highlight both self-expression and freedom of speech in their community guidelines, the central role of those aspects in Tumblr posts seems justified. As a result, Tumblr's emerging role as a distribution channel for information that challenges traditional media is reinforced. Tumblr's post creation interface, which supports utilizing text, images, moving images and audio, further encourages the site's users to craft posts containing multifaceted, multimodal information. The more concrete steps of how Tumblr operates will be introduced next.

Using Tumblr has been made effortless and utilizing a few basic features of the site assists users to run active blogs with personalized content. After creating an account, a blog will be automatically generated. Users are also encouraged to discover, examine and follow other users' blogs to help them find pre-existing content according to their preferences and interests. Upon finding an interesting blog, the user can begin following it with a single click. All posts of each blog the user has followed are displayed in chronological order on the user's *dashboard*, which functions as the front page of Tumblr after logging in. In addition to providing a potentially never ending feed of posts created and shared by the user's followed blogs, the dashboard also provides easy access to tools to adjust settings, access one's own blog, a private messaging system, a search bar, and most importantly, icons for creating a new post at the top of the page. An image of the dashboard is depicted in Figure 1 below.
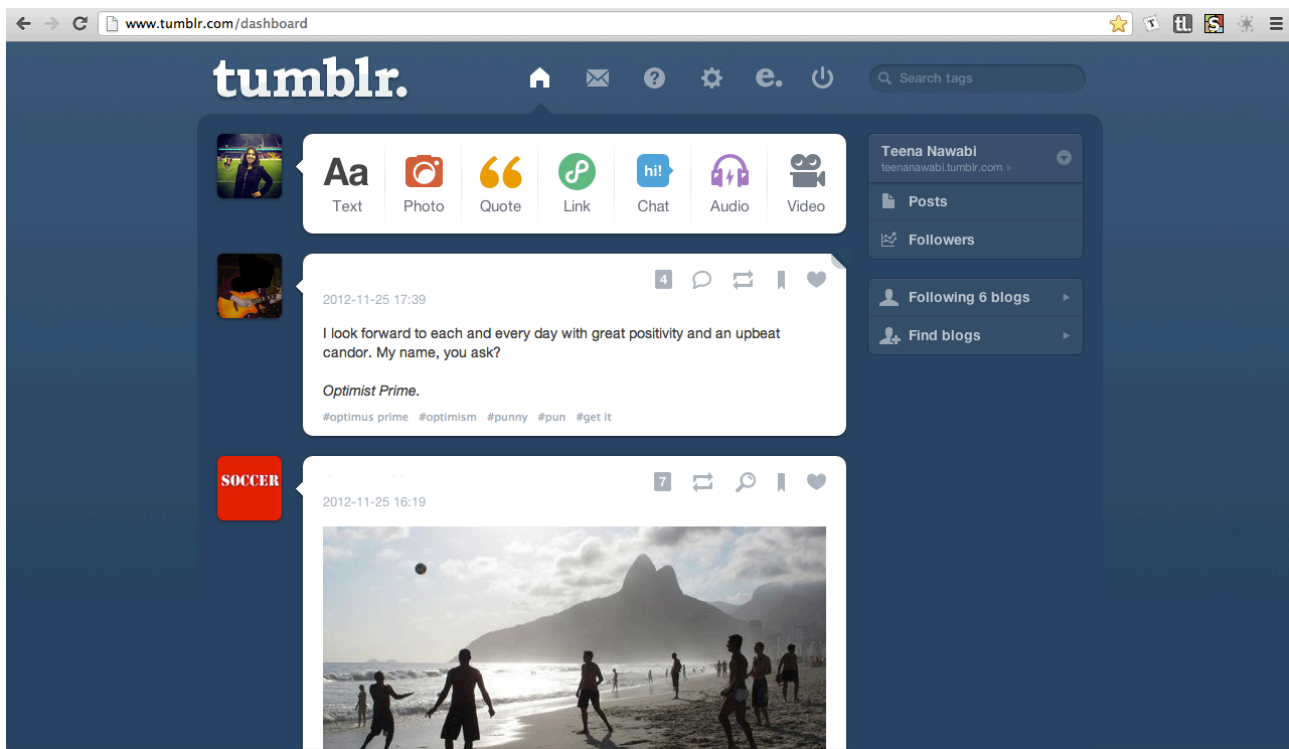
Figure 1: The Tumblr dashboard

The dashboard causes users to encounter posts others with similar interests have shared. The redistribution of such posts is conducted by *reblogging.* By clicking the reblog-button located underneath each post, the post is added onto the user's own blog, while simultaneously being shared onto the user's followers' dashboards. As the number of reblogs increases the visibility of the post to other Tumblr users, a chain reaction of reblogs is often initiated.

Liking, like reblogging, is done by clicking a button below a post. Liking does not result in the redistribution of the post from one blog to the next, but merely adds the post onto the user's list of liked posts, which the user can then revisit at a later time.

Tumblr tracks the number of times a post has been both reblogged or liked. The combined number of likes and reblogs is called the number of *notes* a certain post has. It acts as a quick way of determining the popularity of posts. The higher the number of notes, the more shares or likes the post has, making it more popular. The number of notes on Tumblr posts can vary extensively. Viral posts (i.e. posts which have gained a large amount of attention unexpectedly) can contain millions of notes, while other posts may have zero.

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By utilizing the easily accessible tools designed to construct and redistribute Tumblr posts, the amount of material on Tumblr's servers is constantly expanding. The effortlessness of posting also causes information to spread quickly and potentially globally. Similar methods of posting can also be found on other social networking sites, making it a common trait of social networking sites, which potentially explains the increasing popularity of these channels of information distribution.

Tumblr's role in relation to Twitter and Facebook

Even though social networking sites have similar aims and functions, related to fast and easy creation and distribution of posts and networking globally with other users, some sites have gained specific roles. Some of these roles are worth exploring to understand the different functions of different social networking sites, which are found in the data of the present study as well, due to post redistribution across sites. Redistributing material from one social networking site to another is not uncommon, and stems from the difference of material various sites contain. Some, such as Twitter, contain the latest, most concise information whereas sites such as Facebook contain information on personal life events of individual users. The roles of these two particular social networking sites will be elaborated on below.

Tumblr posts can be constructed around pre-existing online material, e.g. by sharing posts from Facebook, YouTube or Twitter. To further understand the functions of such posts, exploring the different roles of these sites is necessary. Tumblr's role as an effortless tool for sharing creative content and promoting free speech was introduced in the previous section, but further comparisons to Twitter and Facebook aid in detecting the differences in the way these sites function.

Twitter, another widely used social networking site, describes itself as "your window to the world" promoting the acquisition of "real-time updates about what matters to you" (about.twitter.com). Twitter posts are called *tweets* whose length is limited to 140 characters. Even though tweets are commonly perceived to be text-based, the addition of images and videos is also possible.

Even though both Tumblr and Twitter make quite similar statements about their purpose, i.e. highlighting the fast and easy method of posting alongside the access to material one personally finds interesting, the two microblogging services have acquired different roles. Since Tumblr posts contain no limitations regarding length, and the use of various modes, such as videos or audio, is more prominent and encouraged, Tumblr posts include more variation content-wise than tweets. Additionally, Tumblr's intention to act as a site for self-expression and freedom of speech has aided in evoking the creation of posts containing user commentary on social, cultural and political issues, and posts which contain personal art, for example.

While posts on Twitter feature variation due to its large number of active users, it has also gained a specific role as a distributor of current information, often in real-time. This corresponds well with the previously presented statement by Twitter, where the site is described as distributing updates in real-time on events and issues individual users find significant. As a result, Twitter is used, among other things, "to exchange recent 'yellow press' news", while the site also acts as an "important channel for more serious matters". Twitter has been an important information distribution channel during, for example, political crises, and its fast paced manner of sharing current events has made it easy for others to follow those events. (Kaplan and Haenlein 2011: 106)

Tumblr users, too, discuss current events, providing additional or even alternative information on them. At times, this information is redistributed from Twitter where such information is initially produced. In other words, Twitter provides the breaking news broadcast while Tumblr hosts the discussion panel the next day. Twitter's broadcast-like content has been deemed an important quality of the site, in addition to the ability to track large amounts of information in real-time (Zhao and Rosson 2009: 251).

Facebook enables its users to "[c]onnect with friends and the world around you" (facebook.com), providing further material to be redistributed on Tumblr. While Tumblr and Twitter focus more on sharing information and creative material, Facebook emphasizes the life events of individual users and their social networks. This is particularly visible in the way these three sites construct user profiles. On Facebook, one's

full name, contact information and relationships with others are prominent, and posts commonly involve the users' everyday lives. On Twitter, the users may register with their full names, but may also use an alias as a username. Similarly, constructing a profile around one's personal information is also optional. Tumblr users may also wish to host a blog under their own name, but using the site under a username is both possible and frequent. All in all, Tumblr and Twitter can be seen as information prominent sites, whereas on Facebook individual users, their personal networks and life events are central.

The increasing popularity and multifaceted uses of Tumblr have also resulted in some research on the site, some examples of which were briefly introduced in section 1. To provide a more comprehensive account on Tumblr research, some examples on previous research will be explored in the following section.

Previous research on Tumblr

Tumblr, unlike other social networking sites such as Facebook, has not yet been studied extensively. Even though some research exists, for example on exploring fan culture on Tumblr (Hillman, Procyk and Neustaedter 2014) or the construction of Tumblr's queer community (Zamanian 2014), it is often researched alongside other social networking sites.

The two pieces of research mentioned above display a trend in Tumblr research, in which Tumblr is frequently explored through communities. Many *fandoms* (i.e. fan communities) and other groups (e.g. gay or feminist users) use Tumblr and present and construct their groupness on the site, which has resulted in the examination of the culture and identities of these various user communities. Focusing on a particular group of Tumblr users does not promote researching the site as a whole. Even though community-oriented research provides new information on Tumblr and its users, focusing on posts and not the users behind them has been overlooked. In the present study, focus is placed on the topic of posts, not author or the Tumblr community the authors are affiliated with. This provides a new approach to examining the site from a more overall perspective.

Multimodality on Tumblr has only been researched by Bourlai and Herring (2014), who have examined multimodal communication on Tumblr. Their main focus was on detecting sentiment by studying text, images and moving images on Tumblr. Their main results displayed that images were more apt for conveying emotion than text, and that sentiment analysis could benefit from multimodal analysis instead of merely focusing on text. This particular piece of research acknowledges and highlights the importance of analyzing such online environments such as Tumblr from a multimodal perspective, but does not pay particular attention to the multimodal representations of the site. As a result, one can detect a need for research that would examine multimodality on Tumblr that would encompass other communication than expressing emotions through multimodal posts.

All in all, research on multimodal representations on Tumblr has been overlooked. Even though online representations have been examined, e.g. in relation to self-representation online (Fink and Miller 2014), the lack of such research featuring both multimodality and representations regarding Tumblr is prominent. As a result, the present study will focus on examining such representations, particularly from a multimodal point of view. The concrete methods of analyzing such aspects in the present study are introduced in more detail in section 4.4.

2.3 Police brutality in the United States and the civil rights movement

Police brutality has been a prominent issue in the US during the 21st century. Multiple incidents have raised concern towards excessive use of force by American police officers, especially towards African-Americans. Connections have also been made between police brutality and racism. In this section a brief introduction to police brutality in the United States will be provided, in addition to elaborating on how the issue relates to the present study.

Police brutality as a term has at times been utilized interchangeably with "police misconduct", which can include actions such as conducting an unlawful search or using

excessive force. Police misconduct is defined as "conscious, venal, usually concealed" whereas police brutality, in comparison, is more long-lasting and resistant, and often not only involves police officers, but also extends to courts (Bandes 1999: 2-3). According to an annual report crafted on police misconduct in the US during 2010, 4,861 unique reports on cases of police brutality were filed, which involved 6,613 police officers and 6,826 alleged victims. (The 2010 National Police Misconduct Statistics and Reporting Project (NPMSRP) Police Misconduct Statistical Report)

Incidents involving police brutality have also gained media attention, for example Walter Scott (2015 in South Carolina) and Tamir Rice (2014 in Ohio) and their police brutality related deaths were visibly reported on in the media. Additional controversy has resulted from some court decisions in which some incidents have not been brought to trial. In late 2014 the UN expressed its experts' concern over the phenomenon and urged the US to take action against police brutality and excessive racial profiling in the police force (UN News Centre, 5 December 2014).

Even though police brutality has gained attention in the early 2010s, the phenomenon is not new. Issues related to police brutality have existed for decades and have also been examined critically. According to Bandes (1999: 1) "[c]ourts tend to portray incidents of police brutality as anecdotal, fragmented, and isolated rather than as part of a systemic, institutional pattern." This notion extends the issue from the police force to also involve the American justice system, which displays the severity and potential large extent of the issue.

In several deaths caused by police brutality the police officer involved has been white whereas the victim has been black, resulting in public and private speculation on potential racial profiling and racism causing such deaths. Resulting from these discussions on the presence of racism in 21st century America, connections between police brutality in America and the similar struggles of the civil rights movement (which promoted the equal treatment of African Americans particularly during the 1960s) have been made. According to Hall (2005: 1234), the civil rights movement could be seen to have originated as a specific movement in 1954 resulting from a Supreme Court verdict, which deemed it unconstitutional for states to have separate public schools for black and white pupils

(Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, US Supreme Court, 1954). Even though the civil rights movement labored in achieving improvements in the living conditions of African-Americans, achieving legal improvements such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (outlawing discrimination based on race, amongst other things), faced opposition (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015)

The civil rights movement was faced with, according to Hall (2005: 1234), a "white backlash" i.e. an opposing movement led by white Americans, resulting in altercations, activating more members to become involved, e.g. Martin Luther King Jr., a key figure in the movement, who had a dream of an equal society, but was fatally shot in 1968, causing the movement to lose one of its key figures. Later on, a small section of the civil rights movement evolved into a small movement called the Black Panthers, whose initial agenda of protecting black neighborhoods from police brutality evolved into a revolutionist group demanding compensation and exclusion from "white America" (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015).

Historically speaking, police brutality and the civil rights movement have been interconnected since the 1960s, due to the movement's vocal opposition to the deaths of Black Americans as a result of police brutality. Similar connections between the racial struggles of African-Americans then and now are still made. As the civil rights movement during the latter part of the 20th century felt the need to oppose police brutality, the frequent deaths of African Americans as a result of police brutality today keep those ideas current.

2.4 The shooting of Michael Brown

The shooting of Michael Brown occurred in Ferguson, Missouri on the 9th of August in 2014. Since an objective and accurate description of the event has not and cannot be made due to conflicting views, testimonies and opinions, merely various subjective views can be presented. One of the few certain facts concerning the shooting is that a white police officer called Darren Wilson shot an unarmed, 18-year-old black male called Michael

Brown. Two views on the events leading up to Brown's death are presented in more detail below, aiming to display the various outlooks concerning the incident.

Choosing to examine the shooting of Michael Brown in the present study was supported by several factors. Firstly, the shooting was being actively discussed both off- and online during the time when the topic of the present study was being formulated. The abundance of material discussing the incident displayed a prominent opportunity to examine those materials more closely. Secondly, during the months following the shooting, a myriad of Tumblr posts were crafted in relation to it. Information was distributed and rumors, personal reactions, opinions and personal analyses of the incident were posted onto Tumblr, further highlighting these Tumblr posts as a fruitful research topic. Finally, the prominence of Tumblr posts discussing the shooting commonly were arguing that information provided by traditional media was wrong or biased. This trend of challenging traditional media provided further motivation to examine how such Tumblr posts challenged the media and distributed information in their own way.

As mentioned above, two opposite views on the events leading to the shooting of Michael Brown prevailed. Most Tumblr posts discussing the shooting labeled Wilson as a racist murderer, who shot an unarmed young black man for no reason. Many found that Wilson should be charged with murder, and heated arguments on the potential racist motivations linked to the shooting were discussed extensively. Many felt that Wilson utilized excessive force when confronting Brown for a minor misdemeanor. The view of the authorities conflicted greatly with the general opinion on Tumblr. The testimony of Officer Wilson[2] provides not only his account on the incident, but also displays a view shared by most of the authorities.

According to Wilson he engaged in a discussion with Brown in an attempt to urge him and his friend to refrain from walking in the middle of the road. As Wilson attempted to exit his car, Brown assaulted him resulting in an altercation while Wilson remained seated in his patrol car. Wilson took out his gun, which Brown attempted to point at Wilson himself. Wilson managed to fire his gun and Brown began to flee. Wilson pursued Brown

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[2] Wilson's testimony is accessible at https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1370766-interview-po-darren-wilson.html

and ordered him to stop, after which Brown turned around, made an "intense aggressive face" and began charging towards Wilson forcing him to protect himself by shooting Brown several times fatally wounding him.

After the shooting, the residents of Ferguson were quick to react. Those living near the scene of the shooting informed others that a young man had been shot, e.g. via Twitter. Later, these tweets were redistributed onto Tumblr to provide an insider account confirming the shooting, which some assumed to function as a reliable source for information related to the incident. As mentioned in section 2.2, Twitter's role as a distributor of information in real-time enabled footage from the scene of the shooting to be shared before it emerged onto other social networking sites and traditional media, making them potentially the first witness accounts on the shooting. An example of such a tweet is presented in Figure 2 below.
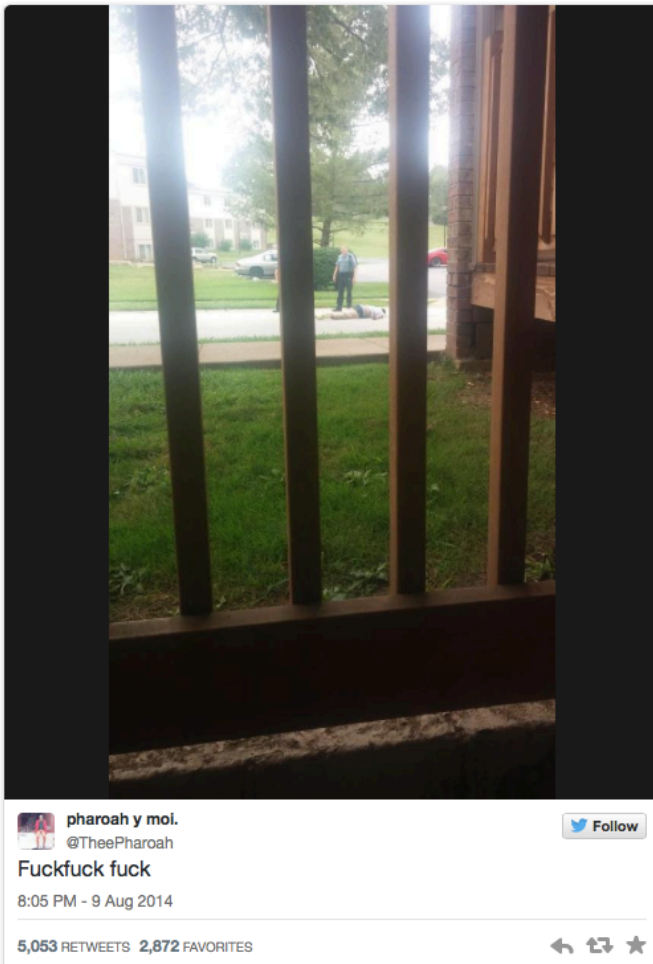
Figure 2: Three tweets by TheePharoah real-time reporting the shooting of Brown[3]

Twitter user TheePharoah witnessed the shooting from his window and tweeted in real-time while observing the events. This series of tweets not only exemplifies how quickly information can be distributed on social networking sites, but also displays Twitter's role as a source of information. TheePharoah's tweets gained attention on Twitter, increasing the online visibility of the shooting, as the tweets were also shared outside Twitter, e.g. on news sites and on Tumblr.

On Tumblr, information regarding the shooting was distributed and circulated extensively, resulting in some users feeling the need to combine information from a myriad of sources into posts aiming to provide a collective post featuring as much information on the incident as possible, enabling viewers to obtain all the crucial

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[3] The figures in this section have been extracted from Tumblr posts in the data, but they will not be a part of the analysis. These examples function as contextualizing elements, exemplifying the information being presented.

information in a concise form. One of these posts is provided in Figure 3 below, in which the author not only provides information on the shooting, but also aims to correct some previously distributed information, which in the author's opinion is incorrect.

Q: Alright, so evidence from three corners reports come in, all three point that Michael Brown was shot charging a police officer, after he attacked him in the police car (there physical evidence inside it). That's evidence, that's truth, that's not up for debate. So what exactly are you angry about? Is a Cop not allowed to defend himself? (**thephantomcasebook**)

A: **serlannisters-deactivated201501**:

let's start off by saying **mike brown was killed with his hands up**. three witnesses say that they saw **mike brown put his hands up in surrender to officer wilson. mike was *running* when he was shot** &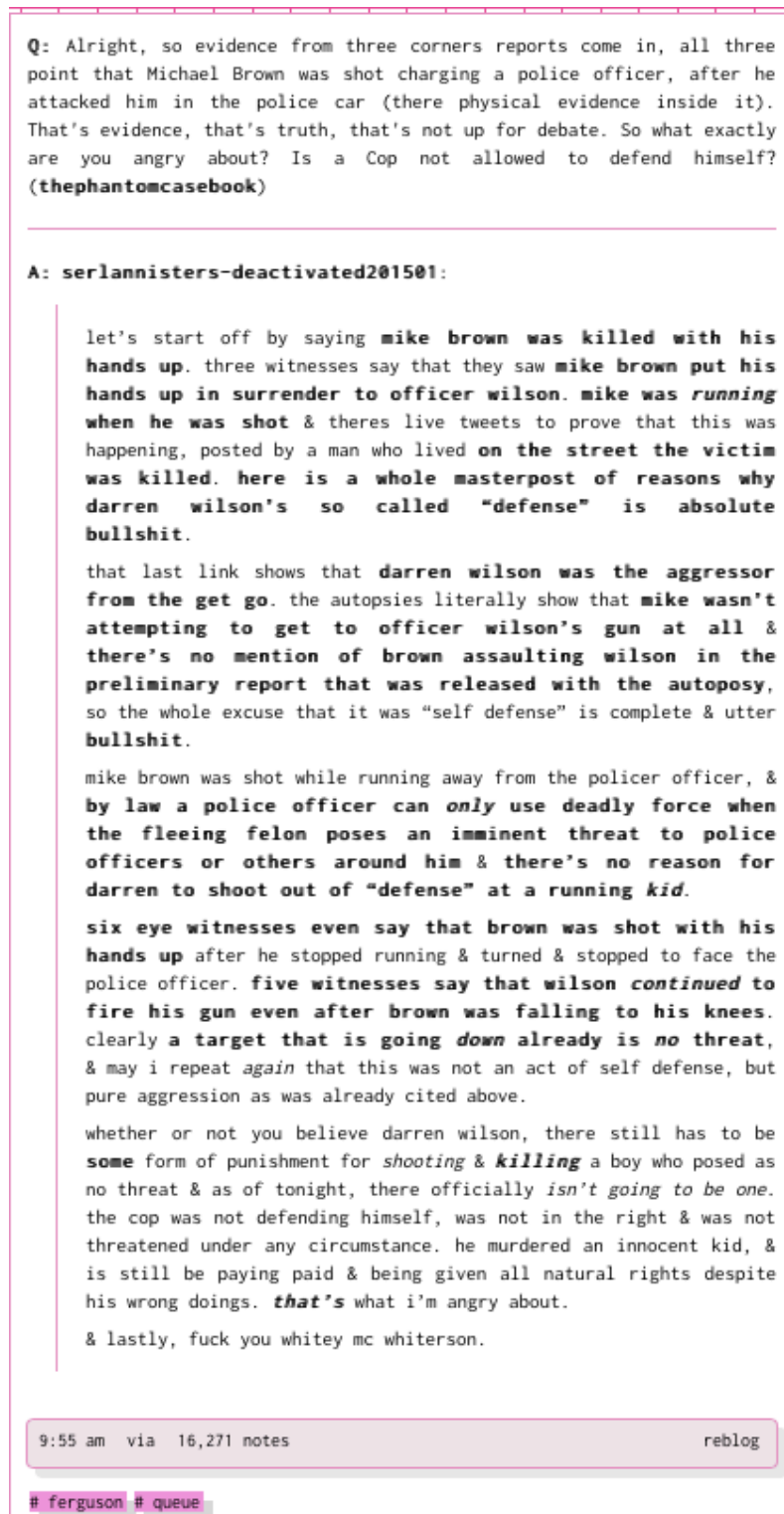 theres live tweets to prove that this was happening, posted by a man who lived **on the street the victim was killed. here is a whole masterpost of reasons why darren wilson's so called "defense" is absolute bullshit**.

that last link shows that **darren wilson was the aggressor from the get go**. the autopsies literally show that **mike wasn't attempting to get to officer wilson's gun at all & there's no mention of brown assaulting wilson in the preliminary report that was released with the autoposy**, so the whole excuse that it was "self defense" is complete & utter **bullshit**.

mike brown was shot while running away from the policer officer, & **by law a police officer can *only* use deadly force when the fleeing felon poses an imminent threat to police officers or others around him & there's no reason for darren to shoot out of "defense" at a running *kid***.

six eye witnesses even say that brown was shot with his hands up after he stopped running & turned & stopped to face the police officer. **five witnesses say that wilson *continued* to fire his gun even after brown was falling to his knees.** clearly **a target that is going *down* already is *no* threat**, & may i repeat *again* that this was not an act of self defense, but pure aggression as was already cited above.

whether or not you believe darren wilson, there still has to be **some** form of punishment for *shooting* & ***killing*** a boy who posed as no threat & as of tonight, there officially *isn't going to be one*. the cop was not defending himself, was not in the right & was not threatened under any circumstance. he murdered an innocent kid, & is still be paying paid & being given all natural rights despite his wrong doings. ***that's*** what i'm angry about.

& lastly, fuck you whitey mc whiterson.

9:55 am   via   16,271 notes   reblog

ferguson # queue

Figure 3: Tumblr post discussing what occurred during the shooting of Brown

The post originated through the use of Tumblr's ask-function, with which Tumblr users (anonymously or under their username) can ask other Tumblr users questions. In this instance Tumblr user (serlannisters-deactivated201501), asks a question from another Tumblr user (thephantomcasebook).

> Alright, so evidence from three corners reports come in, all three point that Michael Brown was shot charging a police officer, after he attacked him in the police car (there physical evidence inside it). That's evidence, that's truth, that's not up for debate. So what exactly are you angry about? Is a Cop not allowed to defend himself?

The question is an argumentative one, in which the author argues that Brown indeed assaulted Wilson, who had no other option but to shoot Brown in self-defense. The author of the question refers to evidence to support their claim. The Tumblr user answering the question, however, does not agree and utilizes several links to online material, which he/she believes will prove that the person asking the question has been misinformed.

This post exemplifies the way conflicting information was presented not only between news reports and social networking sites, but also between individual Tumblr users. Additionally, the last sentence of the post, labeling the Tumblr user behind the question as "whitey mc whiterson" demonstrates the prominent conflict between black and white people, where white people were often viewed as defending Officer Wilson, whereas black people were commonly considered to support Brown while labeling the shooting as a racist attack.

The active discussions surrounding Brown's death continued after the incident as more information emerged as the shooting was investigated by the police, the media and ordinary citizens reporting their observations and opinions on sites such as Tumblr. The shooting evoked much emotion within the largely African-American community of Ferguson (according to the 2010 census 67.4 per cent of the city's inhabitants are black [United States Census Bureau 2010]), which further aided the creation of active discussions on the matter.

Resulting from the increase in official evidence available online, such as autopsy reports and statements provided by the Ferguson police department and eye-witnesses, some Tumblr users utilized the site to display their own investigative posts either contesting or

confirming observations made by the official investigators. An example of such a post is presented in Figure 4 below, which provides the author's arguments against Wilson's claim that Brown charged at him. Support for these views is provided by an image extracted from Brown's autopsy report, depicting the location of the bullet entry wounds.

This is the picture that is being spread around Twitter that "proves" Michael was charging the officer.

1. Michael Brown wasn't a skinny athletic white woman running the fucking 100m dash off blocks.
2. He had on flips flops. You ever tried running in some flops? Even if he had on sneakers, they aren't track cleats that weigh next to nothing.
3.He had to have weighed an easy 200+ lbs. Do you think he could match the angle of her body considering **THEY WERE DIFFERENT HEIGHTS AND WEIGHTS?**
4. **THIS ISN'T HOW PHYSICS AND GUN TRAJECTORY WORK AND COMMON SENSE WORK.**
Stop it. Stop proving how stupid you are. It's hilarious to see you try.
Source: https://twitter.com/leeleemunster/status/502561868641476608
(TW: It's on of the most idiotic anti-liberal Twitter pages I've had the unfortunate luck to come across)

5 MONTHS AGO | 10,012 NOTES | REBLOG
- Fucking idiots - Michael Brown - Justice for Michael Brown - Justice for Mike Brown - Mike Mike - Ferguson - Ferguson protest - racial profiling - racial injustice - Police Brutallity - police murder - racism - Darren WIlson

Figure 4: Tumblr post discussing whether Brown charged at officer Wilson or not

The post consists of two still images at the top of the post, followed by a reaction GIF (the use of which is further explored in section 5.1.3), i.e. a short audioless video clip, which represents the author's reaction to the images and text above it, i.e. a sarcastic, disbelieving expression directed at the arguments presented above the reaction. As a result, this argumentative post consists of pre-existing material (two images at the top, reaction GIF portraying actor Steve Carell from an episode of the TV show The Office) as well as material crafted by the author of the Tumblr post (the textual elements of the post, featuring the author's argumentation). In posts such as these, multiple modes and pre-existing material were gathered to construct a post that would educate others on the author's personal opinions regarding the shooting.

Resulting from the extensive attention the shooting gained both on- and offline, the residents of Ferguson began protesting to encourage authorities to fully investigate the event. Soon protests grew, demanding "justice for Michael Brown" and ending racism and police brutality. Over time, the most active protests and most extensive media attention has subdued, but the event yet remains an instance, which activated people to protest the use of excessive force by the police.

Despite the recent occurrence of the shooting (August 2014), some initial research has been conducted on the shooting, e.g. on the public's response to the shooting (Kochel 2014), its long term impacts on the police (Kochel 2015) and, from the perspective of social media, examining digital protest in relation to the shooting (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). The shooting and particularly the implications it had for the public, the police and the justice system have been researched, but the various meanings that were constructed by Internet users while discussing the shooting have not yet been explored, a gap which the present study aims to fill.

The more specific aims and research questions of the present study are presented in more detail in section 4, alongside other methodological choices, such as the data selection and collection process, as well as the methods of analysis. The following section presents the theoretical background of the present study.

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section the key fields of research and theories aiding in the analysis of the present study will be introduced. Each key field has its own subsection, providing the theoretical background for its key features relevant for the present study. The concrete methods of analysis stemming from these key background theories will be further explored in section 4.

3.1 Media discourse analysis

Media discourse analysis (MDA) is a multidisciplinary field examining various media outlets (e.g. newspapers and television), the use of which dramatically increased during the 20th century. The 21st century and a prominent increase in new media technologies, most prominently the Internet, have caused more traditional media to lose some of its prominence in people's everyday lives. Research related to MDA can range from analyzing language used in newspaper articles to representing gender through linguistic means in films. Within this varied field the discourse of media is in the focus. MDA provides extensive tools of analysis and often acts across disciplines, as it combines interest towards culture, the media as well as linguistics. (Talbot 2007: 3)

Defining the term "media" is vital in comprehending the extensive nature of the kind of research conducted within MDA. Even though the term is actively used in people's communication while being a prominent part of people's everyday lives, some additional scholarly attention is required to understand what the term entails. Spitulnik's (2000: 148) definition condenses media to "not: face-to-face-communication". This suggests that media would involve all communication not conducted face-to-face, encompassing, for example, television, social media and even phone calls. By seeing media in such a broad manner, one can understand the broad spectrum of media MDA can explore.

Defining "discourse" is also vital in understanding the research interests of MDA. Blommaert (2005: 2) has provided a general definition of the term, describing it as "a

general mode of semiosis, i.e. meaningful symbolic behavior", further adding that discourse "is language-in-action", and its analysis requires paying attention "both to language and to action". This definition displays some of the crucial properties of discourse. First, it is behavior that utilizes symbols in making meanings, and second, it is the active use of language, resulting its analysis to require the examination of both the language and the contextual elements in which it is used. Context entails "the connections between language form and social and cultural patterns", which people communicating detect based on "verbal and nonverbal [and] behavioural 'cues'" (Blommaert 2005: 41). In other words, social factors and nonverbal ways of communicating affect the way linguistic communication is interpreted and understood, necessitating contextual analysis.

Additionally, discourse can be defined through the term's division in two, more specifically between the concepts of "discourse" and "Discourse" (with a capital D). According to Gee (2008: 2-4), Discourses "include much more than language" entailing

> ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or "types of people") by specific groups

As a result, Discourses can be viewed as "socially situated identities", resulting from social constructions (ibid.). This differentiates "discourse" as language-in-action and "Discourses" as socially situated identities accepted by particular groups. This division demonstrates the wide spectrum in which discourses operate, and how central these terms are in understanding human communication.

MDA can be utilized in examining meaning making (i.e. creating representations) in media texts, which is also the aim of the present study. According to Matheson (2005: 7) researching representations in MDA consists of examining "how a group of words carries a particular meaning, which we can then identify as performing a political role in reinforcing or challenging power". An example of such action is, according to Matheson (ibid.: 24), the use of labels. Presenting a label onto a person, group or phenomenon can display social categories and the representations that are constructed of the phenomenon in question. By utilizing MDA in examining representations through discourse, one can gain insight into the way those linguistic representations construct a certain view on the

world in media. This view of examining representations constructed linguistically is one of they key areas of focus in the present study.

For the purposes of the present study, MDA provides insights and tools into how media texts create representations both linguistically and contextually. Since several Tumblr posts discussing the shooting of Michael Brown aimed to inform, educate and provide current and correct information to other Tumblr users, MDA was chosen as an appropriate field to utilize when examining such posts, since both media texts and Tumblr posts feature similar aims of informing and representing realities from a certain viewpoint.

As media discourse encompasses not only written texts, but also images, both still and moving, the analysis of such multimodal data enables the analysis of online discourses as well, which often utilize these various meaning making modes in creating content. Even if such analyses are enabled by MDA, another field of discourse analysis specifically focuses on online discourses, providing theories and methods particularly aimed for analyzing such discourses. Computer mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) is utilized in the present study to build on the tools and methods of media discourse analysis, which enable the analysis of representations from a discourse analytic point of view. CMDA as a field and the additional input it provides for the present study is introduced below.

3.2 Computer mediated discourse analysis

As mentioned above, computer mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) can be seen as a complementary field to media discourse analysis (MDA). Because traditional media, such as newspapers, have existed long before the creation of the Internet and social networking sites, CMDA provides tools for analyzing these new types of discourses, solely focusing on analyzing discourses mediated via computers, and today, also with the aid of smart phones, tablets and other similar devices.

Defining the term computer-mediated communication (CMC) is necessary in order to understand what is meant by computer-mediated discourses. CMC is "predominantly text-based human-human interaction mediated by networked computers or mobile telephony" (Herring 2007: 1), which incorporates various kinds of communication, such as blog posts, tweets or text messages. Even though online communication tends to rely more on textual material, computer technologies and various sites enable and even encourage the use of other meaning making modes as well, such as images, videos and audio.

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) provides researchers with challenges traditional media discourse does not, due to the multiple ways CMD can manifest itself in. As discourses produced online can contain one or more modes within content created by several authors from several different backgrounds, its analysis can be challenging. Classifying CMD as speech or writing is difficult, and has forced researchers to debate whether a new type of discourse is present online, which often is formulated as writing due to its creation by typing on a keyboard, but which also possesses many qualities of speech (e.g. quick exchange rate of messages and presence of informal language). (Herring 2007: 2)

Analyzing CMC requires acknowledging the core qualities it possesses, as CMC can be produced in various forms and with various services, creating an unlimited amount of manifestations of CMC. As mentioned above, online communication utilizes several modes in making meanings, which causes it to provide ample and varied material to research with the tools CMDA, particularly because the sole analysis of written online communication does not adequately encompass all online communication. (Herring 2004: 4)

The methods of CMDA vary depending on the focus and needs of particular research projects. One general principle aiding the investigation of computer-mediated discourses is examining the discourses in a detailed way, which, according to Herring (2004a: 4) requires adopting underlying assumptions. First, discourse in this field is believed to possess recurring patterns most casual observers might not detect, requiring scrutiny to be analyzed. Second, discourse is assumed to involve choices made by speakers arising from that speaker's cognition. Third, it is assumed that "computer-mediated discourse may be,

but is not inevitably, shaped by the technological features of computer-mediated communication systems", which emphasizes how computer-mediated discourse differs from traditional media, such as newspapers, for example. By utilizing these assumptions one can theorize on the underlying reasons behind the phenomena one can witness in online discourses. (ibid.)

The methodology of CMDA lies heavily on content analysis which is particularly conducted by examining language (Herring 2004: 4). From a general perspective, content analysis refers to "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1969: 14). According to Herring (2004: 4) "observations of discourse phenomena in a sample of text may be made, illustrated, and discussed", which enables CMDA to carefully examine computer-mediated discourses while systematically observing prominent issues or aspects in discourses. Because this broad definition can contain various concrete methods of analysis, the ones utilized in the present study will be introduced in more detail in section 4.

In general, CMDA's focus on CMC and acknowledging that it may not conform to traditional categorizations such as speech and writing or personal and impersonal enables analyzing these complex discourses in a manner that encompasses variation within discourses. As a result, CMDA provides approaches to analyzing multimodal online discourses, for example, which are in the focus of the present study. CMDA's approach to examining online discourses in a descriptive and detailed way provides direction for the present study. Additionally' the field's observation that online language can function through the use of multiple modes which can mix elements from speech and writing is an approach guiding the analysis of the present study.

3.3 Multimodal analysis

Multimodal analysis enables examining the effects of utilizing multiple modes in various instances of discourse. In order to define "multimodality", one must first comprehend the meaning of "mode". A semiotic mode can be understood as a basic element for detecting

which meaning making units a particular instance of discourse possesses. The term "mode" has been further defined as "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning" (Kress 2010: 79). There are a myriad of various modes which are present in most communicative situations, for example speech, writing, facial expressions or images.

Multimodal analysis can be conducted throughout various disciplines, which has resulted in some debate regarding the fundamental essence of the field. In particular, its role as either a theory or a method of analysis has been discussed. For example, Bezemer and Jewitt (2010: 180-181) argue that multimodal analysis refers to "a field of application rather than a theory", highlighting that multimodality can be explored from the viewpoint of various disciplines as well as theoretical approaches by adapting its uses depending on the discipline in which it is used. In comparison, others have argued that multimodality is, in fact, a theory. Archer (2006: 451), for example, argues that multimodality is both "a theory of communication", contributing to "the theorising of links between shifting semiotic landscapes, globalisation, re-localisation, and identity formation" and "a particular approach to pedagogy", aiming to "value a range of modes through multimodal assessment practices".

These multiple approaches to viewing multimodality provide both opportunities and challenges for multidisciplinary research. For the purposes of the present study, multimodal analysis is understood from a more methodological point of view, in which it is seen to provide the tools with which the meanings constructed by the presence of multiple modes can be analyzed.

In multimodal analysis, language is not considered an isolated mode constructing communication, but emphasis is placed on the need to analyze language in its context, alongside other meaning making modes. For example, analyzing both verbal text and images in a newspaper article aids in examining the meanings constructed by both modes together, instead of focusing solely on the verbal text. (O'Halloran 2004: 1) When multiple semiotic modes are used, multimodal analysis seeks to explore which modes create which meanings, and how those meanings, when combined, create additional meanings by co-occurring and influencing the overall representations produced. Choices of modes and the

way those choices are combined play a crucial role in creating and analyzing multimodal meanings (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 15).

When conducting multimodal analysis one can utilize many research methods and various data. Multimodality occurs, for example, during classroom interactions (through speech, writing, verbal text and so forth), in films (through lighting, music, dialogue, facial expressions and so on) or in newspapers (utilizing verbal text, images, the placement of elements on the page etc.). Due to the large number of various modes which are utilized for making meanings, as well as the unlimited number of combinations those several modes can have, defining a specific set of tools for conducting multimodal analysis is impossible. Selecting one's research methods according to the modes present in the set of data at hand promotes extracting the underlying meanings created by those modes.

In the present study, multimodal analysis enables detecting and analyzing the representational effects several modes have in the data. By acknowledging their presence and acquiring concrete tools of analyzing the meanings arising from the use of each mode as well as their shared meanings, the representations constructed by multimodal entities can be extracted and studied. More specifically, the theories and terms of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) are utilized the most in conducting multimodal analysis in the present study. Their theories and concepts of analyzing the grammar of visual design provide many tools with which to analyze multimodality, particularly images and verbal text. The concrete methods of analyzing meanings constructed with multiple modes are introduced in more detail in section 4.4.

3.4 Representation and making meanings

Representation is a term whose use will be explored below by examining linguistic and visual representations in particular, due to their relevance to the present study. As the term can be defined in a number of ways, only a rather selective definition of the term will be introduced, which fits the purposes of the present study. According to Webb (2009: 1), representation understood in a linguistic manner includes discussing "how meanings are

made through the production and organization of signs". Webb (ibid.) adds that across many disciplines, however, representation is "examined as a way of teasing out the embedded, underlying meanings of texts". This rudimentary description provides direction for the way the term is understood and utilized in the present study; representation will be understood as the way various signs are selected, used and organized in relation to the meanings that arise from those specific uses of signs.

In terms of studying visual representations, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) theory on the *grammar of visual design* is utilized in examining how representations are made in my data. Kress and Van Leeuwen (ibid.: 6) utilize the term "representation" in discussing the way multimodality acts in meaning making. They elaborate that the term includes

> "a process in which the makers of signs, whether child or adult, seek to make representation of some object or entity, whether physical or semiotic, and in which their interest in the object, at the point of making the representation, is a complex one, arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker, and focused by the specific context in which the sign is produced."

This definition encompasses signs and people who make them. By utilizing signs meanings can be made, which can concern either physical things or abstract phenomena. By viewing representations as creations of different individuals through a rather complex process, examining the representations of events, such as the shooting of Michael Brown, aids in understanding individual authors' individual input resulting in the construction of representations.

Examining representations should take into account the personal viewpoint or worldview of the person who crafted them. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 11) explain that making representations "requires that sign-makers choose forms for the expression of what they have in mind, forms which they see as most apt and plausible in the given context." As a result, representations can take many forms, even if they are representing one event, such as the Michael Brown shooting, highlighting the subjectivity of all human communication.

The author's choices and personal input in constructing representations may result from the author's desire to express a certain idea or aspect of the world, but one must also acknowledge the role of the audience. Interpreting informative products crafted by

individuals from a certain viewpoint may result in many different representations extracted by different audiences, since interpretations require some personal input as well. As a result, even carefully crafted representations may resonate differently to different audiences.

For the present study, the analysis of representations enables examining the meanings that arise from the use of multiple modes. Analyzing such representations as well as the additional representations that the presence of several modes create promotes viewing representations form a more complex perspective. Commonly a distinction is drawn between "word and image" when discussing types of representation, and a similar approach will be taken in the present study as well (Mithcell 1995: 3). The following sections will provide a theoretical introduction to linguistic, visual and multimodal representations.

3.4.1 Investigating linguistic representation

Language is a vital part of human interaction and a tool for people to make sense of the world they are living in. Language use also results in the creation of representations. Despite its crucial role in viewing the world, language does not accurately replicate realities or resemble the world as it is, but merely creates interpretations on them (Webb 2009: 43). Constructing linguistic representations requires that one "imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language" (Hall 1997: 25).

Linguistic representation can be divided into three different approaches, all of which provide different methods for examining the way language is structured to convey representations. First, language can be seen as *reflective,* which allows it to resemble meanings that pre-exist in the world. Second, language can be considered *intentional*, i.e. language is thought of as mirroring the exact meaning the author wishes to communicate. This results in various representations, since the same stimuli create different linguistic representations between individuals due to their different interpretations. Thirdly, linguistic representations can be seen as *constructionist*. This approach suggests that

meanings are actively created, which eliminates viewing meanings as pre-existing or as something that are imposed onto things. As a result, understanding and representing the world can be viewed as activities only limited by the parameters of language. In other words, being able to construct a linguistic representation automatically results in constructing a reality.

Even though each approach to linguistic representations has its advantages, the third and final approach will be drawn on the most in analyzing linguistic representation for the purposes of the present study. Assuming language represents the world through people's personal linguistic constructions enables analyzing discourses while taking this personal variation into consideration. The constructionist view is further supported by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 55), who argue that discourses can stem from various, at times even conflicting, points of view, resulting in the different manners of organizing meanings. They add that discourses organize linguistic material based on the broader social context in which meanings are produced, providing perspective regarding the status quo, a phenomenon which has the potential to carry power. (ibid.)

When viewing linguistic representations as the choices individuals make in utilizing discourses to construct personally relevant and truthful meanings, it is worth noting that discourses themselves do not carry a single, unified meaning even though vocabulary, for example, is often regarded as a set of relatively set meanings possessed by words. Birch (1971: 13) argues that "[w]ords have usages, it is said, rather than essential meanings, and a careful analysis of their various usages is likely to be more fruitful than a concentration of attention on the common element in these usages". This highlights the broad nature of linguistic representations, where similar linguistic elements can be utilized in constructing various discourses, which, in turn, may produce very different representations depending on the overall meanings constructed by the author.

Even though language can be seen as a crucial communicative tool in our everyday lives, it is not solely responsible for the representations that arise from our communication. Visual representations are another crucial form of representations in the present study, and it will be introduced in the following section.

3.4.2 Investigating visual representation

The meanings that arise from the use of images, both still and moving, can be seen to function as the main focus of analyzing visual representations. The importance of analyzing images when studying the representations has been highlighted, for example by Ivarsson et al. (2014: 308), who argue that

> [i]mages, pictures and other visual tools form part of the human repertoire for sense-making, and they are embedded in discursive practices both when produced and when read.

In other words, the visual carries a central function in creating representations, which are also involved in the human process of making sense of the world. Visual representations can arise from images, moving images or even the visual layout of elements on a page of a newspaper, for example, providing the analysis of such representations with varied material to examine. The growing importance of visual representations in the way people represent their realities has been noted, for example, by Chaplin (1994: 1), who states that it is "acknowledged to be increasingly influential in shaping our views of the world".

The analysis of visual representations can be done across disciplines and with the aid of various methodological approaches. As a result, defining a single methodology for examining visual representations cannot be done, as the concept does not refer to a specific theory or methodological toolkit. "Visual representation" as a term may also be underused to some extent, as it can be replaced by terms such as "visual content analysis", which according to Bell (2001: 14) refers to

> a systematic, observational method used for testing hypotheses about the way in which media represent people, events, situations, and so on.

 The definition above explicitly mentions that this particular analytical method examines visual elements and the arising (in this case media) representations in a systematic manner. In other words, various fields and approaches may and do utilize the examination of visual representations in an attempt to extract meanings from visual materials, but differences in terminology may result in the various ways of labeling of the same process.

Visual representations have also become a more common part of our daily communication due to the increased use of online technologies. These frequent occurrences of communicating and constructing meanings visually can result from the fact that "the visual may be more useful for transmitting large amounts of certain kinds of information", due to our current preference of "visual forms of representation and communication", as they provide "more effective means of processing" Kress (1998: 55). As a result, as new technologies (such as smartphones and tablets) have enabled us not only to capture but to share visual material more effortlessly, their importance in constructing large packages of condensed information has become more prominent.

All in all, analyzing visual representations has been done across disciplines and with the aid of various theories, methods and terms. Even though the term "visual representations" has not been used extensively to describe the analysis of representations arising from the visual, its importance cannot be ignored. Particularly in modern society, where more and more information is formulated visually to enable the condensation of large amounts of information, analyzing visual representations has become more prominent.

The concrete methods of analyzing visual representations in relation to the present study will be introduced in section 4.4.2, in which an approach by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describing the *grammar of visual design*, providing tools for analyzing visual representations, will be elaborated on.

3.4.3 Investigating multimodal representation

Examining multimodality provides tools of analysis for several fields, as it enables the detailed observation and analysis of meaning making in which several modes are utilized. In this section, general approaches to examining multimodal representations are introduced, especially in relation to social semiotics, whose theories and approaches aid in guiding the selection of the methods for the present study. The more concrete methods of analyzing multimodal representations in the present study will be provided in section 4.4.3.

Social semiotics can be defined as a toolkit apt for analyzing multimodal representations, rather than a field of research. According to van Leeuwen (2005: 1), social semiotics "is not 'pure' theory, not a self-contained field. It only comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems", further adding that it "offers ideas for formulating questions and ways of searching for answers". Analyzing multimodality with the methods of social semiotics is based on the assumption that "representation and communication always draw on a multiplicity of modes, all of which contribute to meaning" (Bezemer and Jewitt 2010: 183). These assumptions alone display how utilizing certain tools of analyzing multimodality stemming from social semiotics enable the detailed examination of multimodality.

However, detecting the presence of multiple modes in communication does not suffice in researching representations, but it also requires examining the context of each communicative situation in which multiple modes are present. Bezemer and Jewitt (2010: 183) argue that when analyzing multimodality one must take "all communicational acts to be socially made, and meaningful about the social environments in which they have been made." As a result, both detection of multimodality and adapting one's analysis to acknowledge and interpret the social situations and environments in which those multimodal messages are constructed is crucial.

In addition to analyzing the representations arising from the use of various modes and their contexts, examining the functions of modes can also provide information on the representations multimodality creates in particular instances of discourse. Various views exist on the overall functions all semiotic activities are assumed to possess. One such categorization of functions is by Halliday, which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 15) sum up as a way of categorizing the functions all modes have. The functions are:

> an 'ideational' function, a function of representing 'the world around and inside us' and an 'interpersonal' function, a function of enacting social interactions as social relations. All message entities – texts – also attempt to present a coherent 'world of the text', what Halliday calls the 'textual' function – a world in which all the elements of the text cohere internally, and which itself coheres with its relative environment.

Observing how multimodal texts represent the world in which we live (ideational), social relations between individuals (interpersonal) and construct a coherent communicative

event (textual) promotes viewing multimodal texts from a more multifaceted perspective. Examining these various functions of multimodal texts aids not only in acknowledging how individual modes function in a multimodal text, but also the way those modes overlap and interact across those multiple modes. Examining the functions of modes encourages a more well-rounded analysis of the texts and highlights the interconnectedness of multiple modes in creating representations.

In other words, analyzing the representational effects of the simultaneous use of multiple modes is crucial when analyzing multimodal representations. Examining the meanings that arise from the multiple modes promotes examining how larger collections of meanings are constructed when multiple modes are utilized. Bezemer and Jewitt (2010: 183) emphasize that "the meanings realized by any mode are always interwoven with the meanings made with those other modes co-present and co-operating in the communicative event."

In general, analyzing multimodal representations can be claimed to require the successful interpretation of all modes that are present, as well as understanding the social and cultural context resulting, for example, from the selection of discourses within a certain communicative event. Examining both the representations arising from several modes separately as well as the representations caused by the simultaneous use of multiple modes promotes viewing multimodal representations from a broader perspective. The concrete methods of examining how various modes create representations can vary between disciplines and discourses, preventing generalizations. The more precise methods of analyzing multimodal representations in the present study are introduced in section 4.3, following the other methodological choices of the present study, which are in the focus of the next section.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this section, the methods for conducting the present study are introduced. First, the aims and research questions of the present study will be elaborated on. Second, the data selection and collections processes will be discussed. Third, some ethical considerations will be provided in relation to conducting research on online data. Finally, the concrete methods of analysis for linguistic, visual and multimodal representations will be presented.

4.1 Aims and research questions

The main aim of the present study, which provides direction for formulating the research questions, is to

> **explore the way Tumblr users produce multimodal, collaborative posts discussing the shooting of Michael Brown, and to examine the multimodal representations that arise from such posts**

This main aim was further divided into two smaller aims. The second aim of the present study is to *elaborate on the ways in which social networking sites, Tumblr in particular, act as post-modern, multimodal and collaborative communication tools*. Focusing on the way Tumblr functions as a site on which multimodality is utilized in constructing posts, which can also involve the collaborative efforts of several authors, can further understanding the significance of Tumblr and other social networking sites as communication tools which are significant in post-modern communication (i.e. communication following the invention of online and mobile technologies). Even though written language often plays a key role in producing content on social networking sites, the present study aims to highlight how written language is merely one mode among many adopted to create meanings on Tumblr.

The third and final aim is to *examine how topics such as current events or cultural, social and political issues (e.g. police brutality and racism) are represented on Tumblr*. By examining Tumblr posts discussing the shooting of Michael Brown, observations can be made on the

multimodal representations affecting the way the event is discussed by Tumblr users. Exploring the representations of this single incident can provide insight into the more general practices of discussing current events and issues on Tumblr.

With the aid of these aims, three research questions were formulated. The main research question for the present study is:

how is the shooting of Michael Brown multimodally represented on Tumblr?

By answering this main research question I intend to observe and analyze the multimodal representations present in the data, which consists of Tumblr posts discussing the shooting of Brown as well as the protests that followed the shooting. In the analysis emphasis will be placed on detecting and examining the various modes present in the posts, as well as the representations that these modes construct on their own and together.

The main research question will be broken down into two additional research questions, which support answering it more comprehensively. My second research question is:

what kinds of multimodal meanings are created on Tumblr regarding the shooting?

By answering this question, more information can be gained on the various meanings multimodality creates on Tumblr. As a result, new insights can be acquired not only on the varied meanings constructed by multimodality, but also on the way Tumblr users choose to represent the shooting of Michael Brown.

Lastly, the second additional research question focuses on the use of various modes, asking:

what kinds of functions do the different modes have separately and together?

By examining the functions various modes possess in my data, their uses in multimodal Tumblr posts, particularly in relation to creating representations, becomes more

prominent. By investigating the different functions of various modes, the significance of each mode in producing meanings and supporting or otherwise affecting the meanings produced by other modes is displayed, which, in turn, highlights the multifaceted representational uses of multiple modes.

The next section introduces the data of the present study in terms of its contents, its selection criteria and collection process.

4.2 Data: contents, selection and collection

The data of the present study consists of 50 Tumblr posts, i.e. separate microblog entries from Tumblr. Some prerequisites were crafted for selecting the posts: each post needed to be in English (as most posts on Tumblr often are), they needed to concern, in some way, the shooting of Michael Brown (be it the shooting itself, the resulting investigation, the protests afterward etc.) and they needed to have more than 10,000 notes (see section 2.2 for definition). This minimum number of notes was deemed necessary to ensure the selected posts were popular, in an attempt to ensure that the posts analyzed would reflect commonly shared opinions or views of Tumblr users.

50 posts was selected as the size of the data since, according to Herring (2004:10), when conducting CMDA "the sample should be of a nature and size to answer the research question(s)". 50 posts contain enough material to enable the recognition of recurring phenomena, and thus, general patterns. Additionally, this specific set of data remains limited enough in relation to the scope of the present study to enable the careful and detailed examination of each post.

Other criteria for collecting the data were not applied. For example, the posts' origin, the date of creation or the blog from which they were extracted were not considered meaningful factors. The data was collected over a three-month period (December 2014-February 2015) to promote encountering a variety of posts, and posts meeting these criteria were collected upon first encounter until 50 posts were collected. On Tumblr, it is

common for certain posts to be popular at certain times, because the frequent redistribution of posts results in higher visibility at a certain time. As a result, a 3-month period of data collection allowed there to be more disparity in the posts that were prominently displayed on Tumblr within that time frame, ensuring variation.

Each post was screenshoted (captured as an image) to provide an accurate display on how the post appeared on Tumblr. Capturing each post as an image enables examining each post as single entity, even if several modes may be present. However, collecting the data as images results in the inability to capture the content of moving images, such as videos. As a result, all the material of the posts constructed with the aid of several modes cannot be captured entirely, but can only be explored by viewing the posts on the blogs on which they appear. For the purposes of the present study the posts captured as images enables the examination of text and images as they are on the posts, the content of moving images must rely on captured still images, textual descriptions and the author's impressions that are made while observing the posts online

Even though the data in its entirety consists of 50 posts, only eight are utilized as examples in the analysis. These eight posts contain such various instances of multimodality that they are chosen to be the posts around which the analysis is constructed. The prominent and varied aspects of multimodality present in these posts provides themes and topics for analysis, which not only aid in introducing the specific posts themselves, but also enable making more general observations on multimodal representations on Tumblr by examining it with the aid of posts displaying such various aspects of multimodality. Investigating these eight posts in a detailed manner enables their various multimodal meanings to be extracted and analyzed in detail, whereas the analysis of all 50 posts would have resulted in a brief, superficial analysis of each post, which would prevent the creation of detailed analytical observations.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Considering the ethical aspects regarding one's data selection and collection are worth contemplating on. Some aspects which crucially relate to the present study will be discussed below.

The issue of viewing online material as *public or private* and that material's responsible use is problematic. Even though posts from social networking sites (such as Twitter or Tumblr) are often publicly accessible, they are not always intended as so. According to Markham and Buchanan (2012: 6) "[p]eople may operate in public spaces but maintain strong perceptions or expectations of privacy." As a result, when utilizing online material as data one must consider the authors' potential conceptions of assumed privacy even though the material is publically accessible.

The data of the present study is public and accessible to any Internet user, which promotes displaying it in its original form without omitting e.g. usernames. Additionally, the posts are often redistributions, which diminishes the focus on the author of the original post, while focusing on their informational content. As a result, in the analysis of the present study the content of posts is analyzed more prominently than the specific individuals behind that content. Additionally, focusing on the content and the representations arising from it does not entail any value judgment relation to its authors. Such a case-based approach in relation to dealing with the public/private nature of one's data and the potential harm using it may cause to the authors is also promoted by the AoIR (Association of Internet Researchers) guidelines.

In the present study, some additional ethical concerns regarding the public/private-debate are created by the fact that some posts have been crafted under the authors' own names, not aliases. This requires considering "[d]oes the connection between one's online data and his or her physical person enable psychological, economic, or physical, harm?",as argued by the AoIR guidelines. One can claim that in the present study, in the instances where an author has posted something under their own name, they have already made a decision to share their social media posts while being identifiable. As a result, concealing those identities is not seen as necessary. Additionally, being able to detect the

username/author behind the posts enables readers to visit their profiles and even interact with them. This is seen as a positive outcome of not concealing their identities, promoting the broader exploration of such authors' opinions.

The usernames of Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr users whose contributions are a part of my data were also left visible. This was regarded as a choice resulting in no harm, because the use of usernames hinders and even prevents the identification of those authors. Again, leaving the usernames visible was seen as a choice to enable readers to explore the social media profiles of those users should they wish to further explore their opinions or views.

All in all, studying online material always presents its own challenges. Considering whether the individuals behind one's data would prefer to remain anonymous or if any harm could be caused due to utilizing their posts requires contemplation. In the present study, the mostly username-based profiles and the way the data commonly utilizes redistribution of posts, resulting in the diminished role of the original author acted as confirmation that concealing the usernames and potential identities is not necessary, but merely provides the reader with the opportunity to explore their profiles should they wish to do so. Similarly, displaying the full names under which some posts in my data were crafted was considered acceptable since the authors themselves accepted their identity to be visible online. Again, the focus of the present study lies on the representations that arise from the posts, not the identities of the authors or evaluating them as people. A general stance of openness was seen more apt for the present study.

4.4 Methods of analysis

The analytical methods of the present study stem from a qualitative approach where the data is analyzed in a descriptive manner, as compared to a quantitative approach where it is examined from a statistical and numerical perspective. Qualitative research can be seen as an umbrella term covering research from various disciplines and approaches, all of which share "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter", resulting in the

study of "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 2).

The concrete methods of analysis are extracted from three of the present study's key fields: media discourse analysis (MDA), computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) and multimodal analysis. The two sub-fields of discourse analysis provide tools for analyzing linguistic representations, whereas multimodal analysis aided in analyzing the visual representations.

To ensure the systematic analysis of both linguistic and visual representations in the data, both kinds of representations are provided with their own analytical frameworks. Posts containing both kinds of representations are initially analyzed separately with the aid of both frameworks, after which additional attention was paid to the way further representations are created due to the presence of multiple meaning making modes which influence one another. The two frameworks are presented below, after which the methods for analyzing the effects of multimodality are introduced.

4.4.1 Analysis of linguistic representation

In this section, the concrete methods for analyzing the linguistic representation of the present study are introduced alongside the framework crafted for the systematic observation and analysis of those representations.

Computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) provides direction for approaching the analysis of linguistic representation. Herring (2004a) suggests that CMDA research can be executed as "purely qualitative – observations of discourse phenomena in a sample text may be made, illustrated, and discussed". This particular approach is particularly useful for the present study, since examining all linguistic representations in the data would be impossible. Linguistic elements interact and influence the representations extracted by different readers and audiences, preventing the creation of a comprehensive account of all representations. As a result, the analysis of the present study attempts to observe,

illustrate and discuss those linguistic representations that arise most prominently, resulting in a more comprehensive exploration of those representations.

Views regarding the size of units to examine when conducting such linguistic analysis are provided by Wood and Kroger (2000: 28), who state that the units researched in discourse analysis can range from small ones, such as words or phrases, up to very long ones, such as paragraphs. Since analyzing discourse is not restricted by the size of the unit one is analyzing, such limitations based on the minimum or maximum length of units of analysis are not crafted. Additionally, no quantitative observations will be made on the presence of particular linguistic phenomena, but emphasis is placed on qualitatively observing those linguistic aspects that more prominently partake in the creation of representations. Altogether, any linguistic units that were seen to contribute into creating representations in a notable way, despite their relative frequencies or length, are analyzed.

The technique of counting and categorizing certain instances of a certain unit can be seen as a common research method in qualitative research, but as Wood and Kroger (2000: 25) argue, this particular method may not serve discourse analysts to its full potential. Since discourse analysis not only focuses on instances of certain words or phrases, but also on what is said, how and with which tools, this method of categorization may exclude some crucial linguistic elements or qualities. That is why this method of analysis is not found apt for the present study. Excluding this method also enables placing more focus on context. While the mere language of the posts already exposes and constructs some representations, analyzing the context of the posts and the interplay of different modes can provide more well-rounded results than using categorization as a methodological tool. When analyzing contextual factors in the data, one must acknowledge that context, which can have many forms and function on countless levels from extremely small to extremely big, is not only mitigated by the one producing the message, but that the receiver of a message also extracts meanings from the message based on their own interpretations of contextual cues. (Blommaert 2005: 40-43)

The specific steps of analyzing linguistic representations in the data are extracted from a framework for media discourse analysis constructed by Carvalho (2008: 167), whose framework is developed "for journalistic texts where written language is dominant (if not

exclusive), such as newspaper or magazine articles". In her framework Carvalho focuses on exploring "the dimensions of the text that matter the most in the construction of meaning" (ibid.: 167). Additionally, Carvalho (ibid.: 167) argues that with slight modifications the framework could also be utilized in analyzing material such as televised news reports or online news. This was interpreted as confirmation of the suitability of the framework to analyze online material. The framework utilizes previous theories from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in arguing that examining contextual elements of media texts should also be done when analyzing media discourses.

Carvalho (ibid.: 167) has divided her framework into two categories: textual[4] and contextual elements. The textual elements contain linguistic tools of meaning making, such as discursive strategies and structural organization. The framework's contextual elements, on the other hand, entail "look[ing] beyond the text" (ibid.: 171-172), which the framework executes by first "looking at various representations of an issue at the time of the writing of one specific news text", and second, analyzing "the historical conditions and the context of production of media(ted) texts". Both of these approaches to contextual analysis are vital to examining representations, but for the purposes of the present study, cannot be analyzed solely in relation to linguistic representations. As a result, Carvalho's views on contextual analysis are not included in the adapted framework for linguistic representations (see Table 1 below), but similar analytical observations on contextual meaning making will be made in relation to all three kinds of representations: linguistic, visual and multimodal.

My framework is an adaptation of Carvalho's, (see Table 1 below), and it aims to provide a concise overview on the tools creating linguistic representations. The application and broader meaning of the terms presented in the framework are discussed in the analysis in more detail.

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[4] In the present study, the term "text" is utilized when referring to "verbal texts", i.e. instances of written discourse, even though the term can also refer to other types of discourse, such as spoken texts.

	Carvalho's framework	My analysis
Layout and structural organization	Surface elements: where the text appears, size of article, presence of additional visual elements, headline, beginning of article, content of first paragraphs	Size of post, content (what elements are present), headline, does the post attract attention, what does the post open with
Objects (topics/themes)	What events/issues are linked to the more general issue being depicted, making links between events and broader phenomena	What issues/events are depicted, does the post discuss any broader social/political phenomena
Actors	Who is mentioned, quoting of individuals/institutions, subjects and objects, relations and identities of social actors, whose perspective dominates	Who are mentioned, quotes/paraphrasing of actors, agency (subjects/objects), whose perspective dominates/is excluded
Language, grammar and rhetoric	Identifying key concepts and their relation to wider cultural and ideological frameworks, vocabulary, register, nominalization, agency (subject/object), metaphors, emotional language	Vocabulary, register, metaphors, emotional language
Discursive strategies	Manipulating the reality by social actors: how things are presented to the reader; framing, composition, selection, positioning, legitimation, politicization	Framing, selection, composition, positioning, legitimation, politicization
Ideological standpoints	Emerging social/political values, alternative constructions of the same reality, what is in the text and what is not	Constructing a reality, what information is given and what is not, what kind of reality is constructed

Table 1. Framework of meaning making linguistic tools (adapted from Carvalho 2008)

The framework is divided into six sections, all of which provide a different angle to examining linguistic representations. The first item of examination is layout and structural organization, which in my analysis requires studying the more superficial elements and content of the post, e.g. the size of the post and if it contains elements that attract the viewer's attention.

Second, the objects of the posts will be analyzed. Carvalho (2008: 167) describes objects as "close to topics or themes", and emphasizes that through objects "discourse constitutes

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rather than just ''refers to'' the realities at stake''. In my analysis, an attempt is made to detect and analyze the posts' objects, by, for example, analyzing the concrete issues or broader social concerns that are being discussed.

Third, the analysis will focus on the actors of the posts, which encompasses "both social agents (someone who has the capacity of doing something) and characters in a (staged) story" (Carvalho 2008: 168). In the present study, analysis is directed towards which actors are mentioned and what actions are they represented as either doing or being subjected to.

Fourth, the framework features the language, grammar and rhetoric of the data. More specifically, phenomena such as vocabulary (word choices), register (is the language official or colloquial), use of metaphors and language that could be seen as evoking an emotional reaction in the reader are under examination. Even though these concepts do not present an exhaustive list of language, grammar and rhetoric, the ones presented in Carvalho's framework were selected as some of the more vital ones in studying linguistic representations from this perspective.

Fifth, the analysis will focus on the discursive strategies of the posts, which entail "discursive manipulation of reality by social actors", aiming to "achieve a certain effect or goal" (Carvalho 2008: 169). The discursive strategies examined in my analysis are framing, selection, composition, positioning, legitimation and politicization. Framing is described by Carvalho (ibid.) as the writer's "selection of an angle of the (complex) reality s/he is talking about." In other words, framing is the angle from which the writer chooses to look at the topic they are writing about..

Selection entails the "inclusion and exclusion of facts, opinions, value judgements, etc." (Carvalho 2008: 169), which in my analysis consists of observing what information the posts include and exclude. The presence of certain information and opinions has a great effect on what kind of reality a post represents. Comparably, composition requires the analysis of the way the material selected for the posts is arranged into a larger entity that produces a specific meaning. (ibid.)

Positioning as a discursive strategy "involves constructing social actors into a certain relationship with others, that may, for instance, entitle them to do certain things" (Carvalho 2008: 169). This strategy can be seen as somewhat related to the way actors' identities are constructed in texts in general, but for the purposes of my analysis, positioning of actors will be examined mostly from the point of view of relationships with other actors, which enables the analysis of their relationships.

The two last discursive strategies are closely related to politics and power. Legitimation involves "justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons" (Carvalho 2008: 169), which is a discursive strategy closely related to socially and culturally constructed concepts of morality. Politicization, on the other hand, features assigning a political meaning to a reality that is being represented (ibid.). Through politicization, linguistic material can be assigned to carry a political message, for example a statement can be linked into a broader political context.

Finally, the framework features examining ideological standpoints. In the analysis a more general sense of meaning is examined, which can be detected by analyzing the kind of reality the posts construct through linguistic representations. By utilizing tools provided by the framework, such as inclusion or exclusion of facts or various discursive strategies, generalizations can be made regarding the presence of ideological statements.

4.4.2 Analysis of visual representation

In this section a framework adapted and utilized to analyze the visual representations in the data will be presented. As mentioned above, the main source for the framework is multimodal analysis, in particular Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) work on *the grammar of visual design.* Kress and Van Leeuwen provide several aspects through which visual representations can be analyzed. The main themes categorizing the grammar of visual design were selected as the key categories for organizing the various aspects of visual representations. Table 2 below presents the adapted framework featuring these categories, the contents of which will also be elaborated on.

Narrative representations	Participants, vectors (imaginary lines connecting participants)
Conceptual representations	Classification of participants (labeling, esp. in diagrams), analytical processes (parts forming a whole) symbolic processes (symbols added into pictures, giving participants their individuality)
Position of the viewer	Gaze: demand/offer (face looking at the viewer/not looking at the viewer), size of frame and social distance, angle
Modality	Realism/irrealism (amount of detail), Modality markers: color saturation/differentiation/modulation contextualization representation depth illumination brightness
Composition	Information value (placement), salience (what stands out), framing (elements' connectedness)

Table 2. Framework for analyzing visual representation, adapted from *The Grammar of Visual Design* (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006)

In the framework there are five main categories of visual meaning making. Each category is briefly introduced below, while more detailed definitions on the meaning of each individual concept is provided as it is applied onto analyzing my data.

First, the framework features narrative representations, in other words, tools of creating narratives through visual means. The concept of *participants* is closely linked to narrative representations. It is a term used by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 47) to describe the objects present in an image, which can have roles in terms of active participation. These roles are often signified by the use of *vectors*, i.e. diagonal invisible lines signifying action between participants, which create a link between those elements (ibid.: 59).

Vectors often appear in two kinds of processes in which represented participants are being linked to one another. In *transactional processes* something is actively being done by an actor towards a goal. Also *non-transactional* processes exist, where an actor is doing

something but there is no goal, i.e. the act of doing is not specifically aimed at a recipient. (ibid.: 50, 63) *Reactional processes*, on the other hand, features a similar use of vectors as transactional processes, but in reactional processes the vectors are created by an eye line, a gaze. This results in the creation of a *reacter*, i.e. the participant who does the looking, and a *phenomenon*, the participant or thing the reacter is looking at. Due to the crucial nature of looking in creating vectors within reactional processes, the reacter must be either human or otherwise clearly feature an eye-like quality to enable the detection of the gaze. As with transactional processes, also reactional processes do not necessarily require a target, enabling the creation of *non-transactional reactions* in which the reacter is visibly looking at something the viewer cannot see. (ibid.: 67) The analysis of vectors enables the examination of action and movement within still images as well as the relations between participants that the images are constructing.

Second, the framework features *conceptual representations*, which aid in relating elements within an image to each other. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 79) describe conceptual representations as "representing participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure, or meaning." Additionally, conceptual representations can be constructed through *symbolic processes*, which aim to represent what "a participant *means* or *is*" (ibid., 105) by representing the identity of something (called a carrier) through symbolic attributes, for example by being given traditionally symbolic qualities or by standing out in an image. (ibid., 105) In general, when conceptual representations are analyzed, one can make observations on how the creator of those representations has classified the world, possibly creating hierarchies or other methods of displaying value judgments visually.

The third category of analyzing visual representations examines the position of the viewer, which can provide information on how the viewer is intended to relate to the content of the image. This positioning will be analyzed through three aspects: *gaze, size of frame* and *social distance and angle*. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 116-121) categorize gaze through two phenomena: *offers* and *demands*. Demands entail represented participants making direct eye contact with the viewer, establishing a relationship between the two and demanding a reaction from the viewer. Offers, on the other hand, are images in which the viewer becomes the subject, observing the participants in the image, as if they were

"specimens in a display case" (ibid., 119). Offers enable the viewer to see the represented participants' face, but viewer and represented participant are not positioned face-to-face.

Size of frame and *social distance* refer to the kind of shot, in film terms, that is being utilized in an image. By choosing whether the participant is presented in a close-up (showing head and shoulders only) or in a medium long shot (displaying the full figure of the participant) can be interpreted to represent the social distance the viewer is assumed to have with that participant (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 124). As a result, the size of frame corresponds with social distance, ranging from intimate (seeing only the face or the head of the participant), to public (seeing the torso of at least four people) (ibid., 25). *Angle,* on the other hand, refers to the angle the image was taken from, further aligning the viewer and represented participants (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 134). For instance, in relation to horizontal angles, choosing a frontal view implies involvement between the viewer and the image, whereas an oblique angle creates distance (ibid., 136). Similar processes can be utilized in analyzing other choices of angle within images.

Fourth, the framework entails *modality*, which aims to investigate the realistic qualities in images. Analyzing modality is done, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 160-163), by utilizing modality markers, which feature qualities such as color saturation (fully saturated color vs. no color), contextualization (no background vs. very detailed background) and depth (no perspective vs. deep perspective), among other things.

The fifth and final category in the framework is *composition*, which can be analyzed with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 177) three key topics: *information value, salience* and *framing*. Information value refers to the way elements are placed in relation to others, since the placement of elements can affect the way viewers interpret their importance or novelty (ibid., 180-186). Salience entails the way hierarchy is constructed between elements in an image which is examined by interpreting various visual cues (such as sharpness or color contrast), resulting in detection of the visual weight of various elements (ibid., 201-202). Framing, on the other hand, entails "[t]he presence or absence of framing devices", which can aid in (dis)connecting elements in an image from one another, creating a sense of groupness between them (ibid., 177).

All in all, applying these tools to the visual material in the data, the multifaceted visual representations can be researched and analyzed in detail. The meanings resulting from the simultaneous presence of both linguistic and visual representations results in the creation of multimodal representations, which are also explored in the analysis. The examination of multimodal representations is introduced in the following section.

4.4.3 Analyzing effects of multimodality

Based on previously crafted research and theories regarding the examination of multimodal representations (see section 3.4.3), this section introduces insights and more practical approaches that have been adopted to examine multimodal representations in the present study.

Since one of the aims of the present study is to examine what kinds of meanings multimodality creates, it is vital to examine how the simultaneous use of several modes creates further representations. This view is supported by Kress (2000: 1), who argues that in an era of multimodal texts "it is now no longer possible to understand language and its uses without understanding the effect of all modes of communication that are copresent in any text." Kress's view is further supported by Ajayi (2008: 210), who argues that

> "in multimodal texts, language and images can be deployed independently and interactively in a way that visual images communicate something different from language – or the two modes (linguistic and visual) can combine to produce a meaning that neither conveys separately".

This highlights the importance of examining the use of multiple modes. Even though representations are created by one or more individual modes, the collaboration of those modes presents representations that can only be constructed by utilizing several modes. These representations cannot be generalized, but require the systematic analysis of each example where multimodality is present. The specific combinations of modes and content construct representations which influences the way viewers interpret discourses.

Due to the way multimodal representations depend on both the material and modes selected to construct unique multimodal entities, such as Tumblr posts, no all-encompassing guidelines can be provided to guide the analysis. Examining multimodality at this scale requires making systematic observations on the specific content at hand, and by making observations on all the various modes and the representations which those modes create, the multimodality and its effects on representations can be examined. As a result, in the present study no concrete framework or other methodological tool is employed in the analysis of multimodal representations. Instead, in the analysis all modes present in a post will be examined separately in order to extract the meanings they produce, after which all those representations will be examined together in order to analyze how those representations construct a cohesive unit of multimodal representation, and which additional representations can be seen to be created due to the multiple modes' interaction.

The following section contains the analysis of the present study. First, an overview on the modes present in my data is provided, after which the analysis is divided into subsections, all of which focus on multimodal representations from the perspective of a certain phenomena or a certain example.

5 ANALYSIS

This section presents observations and insights on the multimodal representations on Michael Brown's shooting in my data. With the aid of tools crafted by previous research presented in sections 2 and 3, as well as the methods introduced in the previous section, the data will be analyzed to answer my research questions. The main body of the analysis is divided into subsections, each of which discusses a certain phenomenon or aspect of multimodal representations, as illustrated by examples extracted from my data.

Section 5.1 provides an overall account on the relative frequencies of each mode present in the data, after which each mode is introduced in more detail. Section 5.2 examines posts that utilized comparisons between the Ferguson protests and the civil rights movement in creating representations from a more historical standpoint. Section 5.3 features posts in which Michael Brown and his family are multimodally represented by using family photos. Section 5.4 analyzes a post which displays and discusses media representations of Michael Brown. Finally, section 5.5 analyzes two posts in which pre-existing posts from other social networking sites (Twitter and Facebook) are redistributed and elaborated on as Tumblr posts. Organizing the analysis in this way promotes examining the multimodal representations arising from the data first from a more general and historical perspective, then from a more personal standpoint, and finally, from the broader perspectives of media representations and multimodal interaction of social networking sites.

5.1 Introduction of the modes of the data

This section introduces the data at hand to present each mode individually, as well as their frequencies. Additionally, a quantitative description of the modes present in my data is presented, which aims to display the data in a more comprehensive manner. The quantitative aspect provided below functions as additional contextual information even though qualitative analysis remains the focus and main approach in conducting my analysis.

Even though Tumblr enables posts to be constructed with the aid of several modes, such as videos, text (i.e. verbal text), images and audio, two modes were most widely used in my data: images and text. All 50 posts contained text, which most often co-occurred with images. Over half (i.e. 27) of the posts in my data consisted of both text and images. Additionally, 16 posts featured text alone, five posts contained both text and moving images, and only two contained three modes: text, moving images and still images (see Table 3 below).

- Text + image (27)
- Text (16)
- Text + moving image (5)
- Text + moving image + image (2)
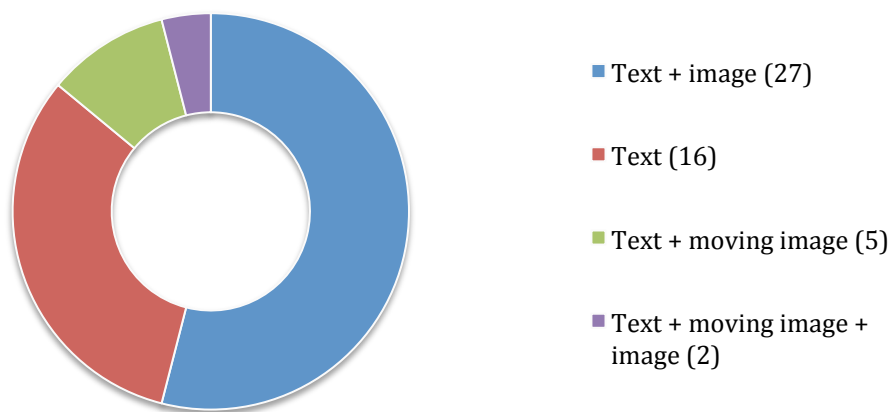
Table 3: The use of various modes in my data (50 posts)

Due to Tumblr's rapidly increasing post count and the opportunity for users to edit and add more content onto pre-existing posts, a generalized account on the use of various modes on Tumblr is difficult to provide, preventing comparison between general trends on Tumblr and my data. In the following sections each mode will be introduced briefly to elaborate on how these modes appear in my data, as well as some of their frequent functions.

5.1.1 Text

Text is utilized in all 50 posts of the data, making it the most widely used mode. Even though text commonly appears alongside images, my data also featured posts that only contain text, which are aptly called "text posts" by Tumblr users.

The frequent use of text in my data may result the functions the mode frequently acquires. Even though all modes, text included, can have various functions which overlap and become intertwined with the multifaceted functions of other modes, some rudimentary generalizations can be made on how text as a mode often operates. Text appears frequently in online communication, and on (micro)blogging platforms in particular. Blog posts, for instance, are "primarily textual", even though the use of other modes is also possible (Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht 2004: 222). Other social networking sites such as Twitter have also been described as producing "text-based posts", further highlighting the mode's central role on social networking sites in general (Jansen et al. 2009: 2172). The common use of text on Tumblr can be seen to mirror these conventions arising from other social networking sites.

Today's technology also promotes the frequent use of text. A large portion of communication executed via computers, tablets and smartphones, e.g. instant messaging or blogging, utilizes text frequently. These technologies also all feature keyboards, which enable typing text messages, emails and social media posts anytime, anywhere. As a result, crafting a post around text can be seen as a low threshold activity of self-expression on social networking sites such as Tumblr, which enables the use of textual resources most Internet users are already equipped with.

Adding text to accompany other modes, such as images, is also often made simple by various social media platforms, which promotes the creation of multimodal posts featuring text. Comment sections are provided on various social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube or blogs, which encourage users to produce and share text in the form of comments. Text-based online communication is also promoted by the prominent growth in the number of online messaging applications, in which textual messages enable Internet users to interact with each other.

The common use of text in online communication provides confirmation for its frequent use in my data. However, even though text functions as a popular way with which new meanings are constructed and shared online, one must also acknowledge the supportive role text at times has in online communication. While images and videos are provided with captions and textual descriptions, text in those instances operates in a supporting

role, merely elaborating, contextualizing or even conflicting and challenging the main body of information constructed with other modes.

5.1.2 Images

Images are another commonly used mode on social media, and their functions, which may promote their use in crafting representations online, are worth exploring.

While producing text on social networking sites is promoted by the insertion of comment boxes on social networking sites, for example, a similar process encouraging the use of images can also be detected. The growing popularity of social networking sites may have increased the users' demands on being provided with tools to utilize multiple modes, such as images, when constructing posts. As a result, many social networking sites have added and highlighted the option to craft a tweet, a status update or blog post around an image.

Commonly images accompany text and provide authentication, e.g. on emails, Facebook status updates or tweets. Images can reaffirm the meanings produced by the coexisting text, creating a cohesive unit of multimodal meaning. Technological advances such as the ability to take photographs with one's smartphone, an item many carry with them continuously, has further promoted the production and redistribution of images, endorsing their frequent use on social media.

Images tend to carry their own valued role as items representing reality, or in other words, they are thought of as items providing authentication and confirmation to online information. The term "visual turn" has been utilized in describing the change through which emphasis on verbal text has decreased, while the use of the visual mode in conveying information has become increasingly more prominent (Kress 1998: 58). This general change of valuing the visual over textual has ranged from newspapers to television news reports.

A similar shift in frequently utilizing the visual mode can also be seen in online communication. For example, a phrase, "pics or it didn't happen", has been coined on

social media, which is used to demand images to authenticate a seemingly unbelievable written claim (Săvulescu and Vițelar, 2012: 1). The use of such a phrase highlights the value that is placed on the visual in representing reality in an unbiased or realistic manner in comparison to text. However, the ability of images to act as representations of the truth has decreased during the 21st century, due to technological developments such as Photoshop, a photo editing software which enables the user to digitally construct images depicting anything. The frequent use of images online has also been promoted by the ability to easily access vast collections of pre-existing images online, and to share them as a part of one's online communication. This redistribution of images eliminates the need to produce original image content to use the mode frequently online.

From a more general standpoint, the advantages of presenting new content visually have been explored, and they entail, according to Nicholson-Cole (2005: 258),

> the capacity to: convey strong messages, making them easy to remember; condense complex information and communicate new content; provide the basis for personal thoughts and conversations, contributing to people's memory and issue-awareness; communicate ideas in an instant using many different media and contexts.

As these advantages promote how presenting one's content visually furthers the condensed mitigation of strong messages, adopting such an approach seems to align well with the fast-paced requirements of producing condensed information on social media. The functions of images in addition to their easy addition onto posts on social media have undoubtedly increased their prominence online, and as a result, in my data as well.

5.1.3 Moving images

Even though text and images tend to be prominently present on the Internet, the popularity of videos has also been increasing. Popular social media sites such as YouTube encourage video creators to share their original video content with other social media users, which results in an ever-expanding number of new, creative online videos, which are shared via YouTube to Internet users. The strengths and prominent features of

YouTube, which help in explaining the site's increasing popularity, have been explored by Burgess and Green (2008: 2), according to whom

> on YouTube, aesthetic values, cultural forms, and creative techniques are normalised via the collective activities and judgements of the entire social network—forming an informal and emergent (and by far from homogeneous) 'art world' that is specific to YouTube

Despite hosting videos, users of YouTube can also communicate by posting written comments. The ability to comment has been found to permit users to negotiate their membership within their social networks (Lange 2007: 376), which solidifies the status of video sharing social networking sites, such as YouTube, as important arenas for online social interaction. In addition, even though YouTube's function could mainly be seen as video sharing, some users utilize the site specifically for social networking (Burgess and Green 2008: 3). In general, these specific functions associated with social networking sites operating around videos aid in displaying the significant role moving images have on social networking sites. The popularity of these kinds of sites is displayed by YouTube's own statistics, which state that every minute over 300 minutes worth of video is being uploaded onto their servers, while YouTube's user count has already exceeded one billion (https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html).

As YouTube acts as a major source of online videos, their prominence on other social networking sites has also increased. However, as a mode videos are not as prominently present as text and images, particularly on Tumblr. This can be due to the fast paced environment of a Tumblr dashboard, where an endless stream of posts is presented and selectively browsed by users. Videos, unlike text and images, require Tumblr users to start them manually, after which the user is commonly redirected to an external site to view the video. Since scrolling through one's Tumblr dashboard can often entail skimming and selective reading while facing immense amounts of multimodal data, videos may be too time and effort consuming to be frequently used on Tumblr.

In my data, moving images were found in seven out of 50 posts, making them the least used mode in my data. The use of longer videos in particular (i.e. videos lasting more than 10 seconds) only occurred with one post, which featured a redistribution of a two-minute YouTube video, which was accompanied by textual commentary. The rest of the videos

present in my data were, in fact, microvideos, not exceeding 10 seconds in length. A prominent type of microvideos, GIFs, is introduced below, especially in relation to the data of the present study.

A subcategory of microvideos called GIFs (short for the Graphics Interchange Format) is a microvideo which can be seen as a post-modern video clip matching the fast-paced requirements of Internet users. GIFs are short video clips, which have no audio (making them purely visual), repeating themselves endlessly and automatically. GIFs can be made by those with more advanced technological knowledge by utilizing any pre-existing video, and they can be characterized as visual quotations, capturing a reaction, facial expression or event which the user wishes refer to in another context. These video excerpts can vary in size and duration, enabling their creator to capture any part of any video they find interesting. According to Rich and Hu (2014)

> "[a]n animated gif is a magical thing. It contains the power to convey emotion, empathy, and context in a subtle way that text or emoticons simply can't".

This description provides perspective regarding one of they key roles GIFs commonly have on Tumblr: they replace the tedious task of textually describing one's emotions or reactions by merely substituting that textual description with its visual, representational counterpart, in which someone or something is displayed experiencing similar emotions or reacting in a similar way than the user who is using the reaction GIF, an example of which is presented in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: A still image depicting a Tumblr post utilizing a reaction GIF, which refers to "when you gotta act like you don't know about the surprise party".[5]

Even though reaction GIFs are only present in six posts in my data, their use is common and popular on Tumblr. They have become more common and have begun appearing on several social networking sites, even though they have become associated with Tumblr in particular (Bourlai and Herring 2014: 1). Their popularity and redistribution has had a trickle down-effect, which has resulted in their wider. For example, Facebook enabled the use of reaction GIFs in mid-2015 in status updates.

Example 1: Using a reaction GIF

The frequent use of reaction GIFs on Tumblr is enabled through their easy integration onto posts, even if they already contain other modes, such as text and/or images. GIFs can be inserted into any post and they replay themselves automatically, not requiring any viewer activity to view them. As a result, integrating GIFs into a multimodal post is effortless both for the author and the viewer. Reaction GIFs blend into the multimodal content of

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[5] This Tumblr post is not extracted from the data, but merely exemplifies the use of reaction GIFs.

posts and promote viewers to expect and interpret the interplay of multiple modes within a single post. Even though authors of Tumblr posts may wish to convey a certain idea or emotion via reaction GIFs, actual interpretations vary between audiences. Reaction GIFs often portray people, commonly those seen on TV or in a film, since crafting GIFs from pre-existing video material originating from popular culture is easy due to easy accessibility of such videos. Interpreting such GIFs can be affected due to pre-existing information, or the lack thereof, on the content portrayed by the GIF. Such previous information can alter the way viewers interpret the GIF's content and the meanings that are being constructed. An example of this is provided in example 1 below.

Example 1: A screenshot of a Tumblr post from my data utilizing a reaction GIF

Example 1 displays a multimodal post containing text in the form of a quote, followed by a reaction GIF featuring a woman laughing. The GIF originates from the popular TV series Orphan Black, containing a close-up of a woman, one of the main characters from the series, laughing while holding a drink in her hand. This expression of joy presented by the reaction GIF linked with the quote above can be interpreted as a narrative: the user attempts to represent their own reaction (i.e. laughing) when encountering the news of Darren Wilson's (i.e. police officer who shot Michael Brown) fundraiser being shut down.

This particular example also demonstrates the various interpretations and representations different audiences may extract. As mentioned above, the woman in the GIF is from the TV series Orphan Black and is recognizable to those familiar with the series. Such viewers know that she is in fact a malicious character, laughing in an evil manner. As a result, those viewers may interpret the GIF not to portray laughter, but evil laughter in particular, creating a different representation from the one extracted by other audiences. In other words, aspects of reaction GIFs such as origin, previous use or contextual cues can alter the way it is interpreted by different viewers.

Even though a textual narrative could replace the reaction GIF while conveying the same information, the GIF enables the author display their emotions visually, not verbally, potentially replacing a lengthy written description. Additionally, the reaction GIF provides the post with visual interest, utilizing a prominent image of a human face. Seeing a human face in the stream of Tumblr posts can attract attention, as it creates psychological salience, making the visual element more visually prominent (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 63).

The next section provides the first examples from the data, which are analyzed in detail with the aid of the previously introduced frameworks for examining its linguistic and visual representations. Emphasis will also be placed on analyzing the additional representations that arise from the simultaneous use of multiple modes. These first two examples feature a similar topic as both discuss the shooting of Michael Brown as well as the ensuing protests by linking them to the civil rights movement.

5.2 Providing and representing historical context with images

Michael Brown's death acted as a catalyst to a lively and heated public discussion on race, civil rights and police brutality, which is also reflected in my data. Even though Tumblr, like many other social networking sites, commonly focuses on current phenomena, connections to historical events in relation to the events in Ferguson have been made, generating posts featuring parallels between the Ferguson protests following Brown's

death and historical events. This section introduces some posts that feature such connections and comparisons while examining which modes are used in constructing these posts, what kinds of functions the modes have and what representations are created.

Example 2: History repeats itself: civil rights movement vs. Ferguson protests

Example 2 features a post which links the Ferguson protests and the civil rights movement, which was at its most active in the 1950s and -60s (see example 2 below). The post is constructed around two columns of images: the column on the left features black and white photos taken of the civil rights movement, the column on the right contains color photos taken of the protests in Ferguson. Similar photos have been chosen on both columns so that when placed next to one another, the adjacent images from different decades depict similar content, such as black protestors being faced by white police officers.
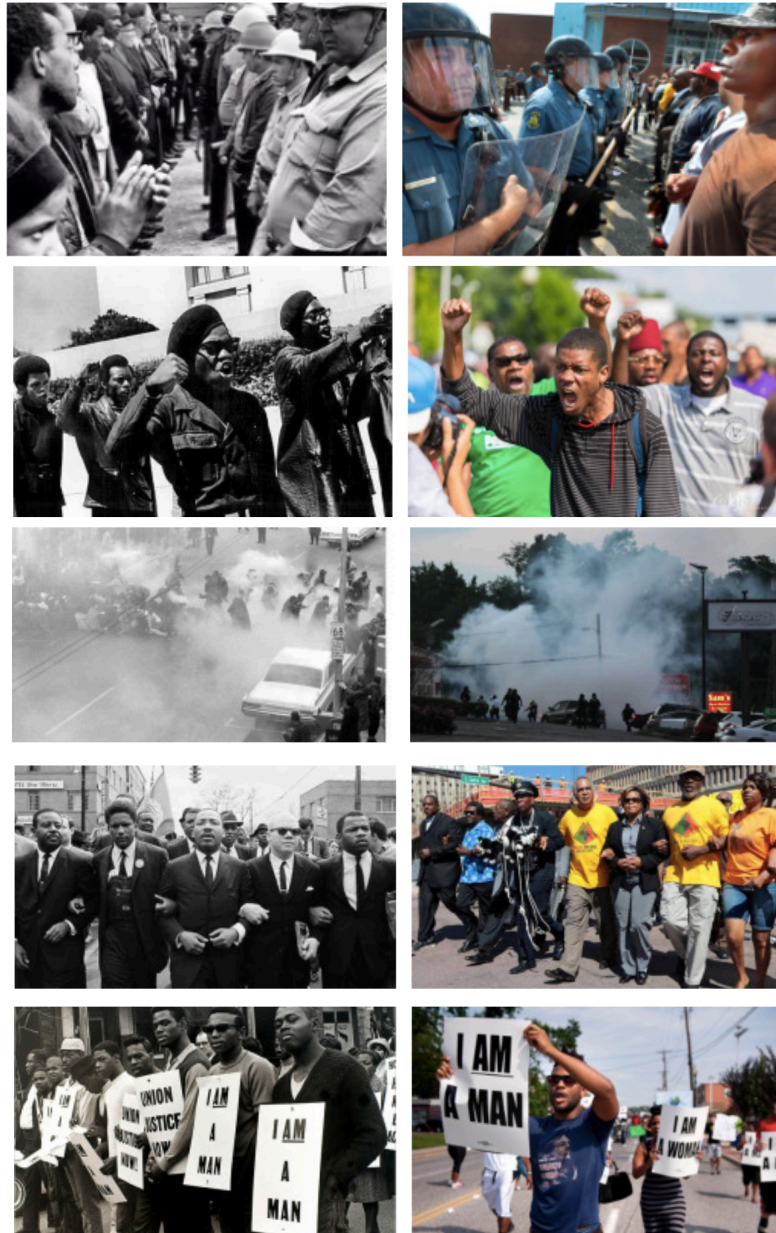
thevampirequeen:

Civil Rights Movement vs Ferguson Protests

And tonight, the Missouri National Guard.

Example 2: Image post comparing photos from the civil rights movement and Ferguson protests

Visual representation

The visual similarity in the two sets of images is not coincidental, but displays the author's intentions to guide viewers to interpret the images as a cohesive unit with a joint meaning. Even though posts on social media have traditionally been viewed as unplanned and hastily made, it has been stated that crafting a post often requires planning, which aims to attract the attention of other users. According to Romero et al. (2011: 32)

> [g]iven the mushrooming popularity of Social Media, vast efforts are devoted by individuals, governments and enterprises to getting attention to their ideas, policies, products, and commentary through social networks.

In example 2, two columns with similar images from different decades promote comparison, which in turn encourages detecting similarities between the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests. Image selection and composition are both meaning making methods applied by the author, which aid in directing the viewers' interpretations, even though multiple interpretations between various audiences are always possible.

Examining some general *functions of images* aid in understanding how in this particular example the mode is utilized in creating representations. Firstly, images can be perceived to be static snapshots capturing the realistic state of events at that particular time. As a result, photos can function as authentication. However, the capability of images to capture reality is not definite. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 154) "while the camera may not lie – or not much, at any rate – those who use it and its images can and do", implying that the photographer possesses the ability to visually capture what they wish to capture. This influences the interpretations the viewers extract from such images, as they can be positioned in a certain way in relation to the represented participants in the images. Some concrete aspects of the images in this example influencing the arising representations are introduced in more detail below.

Secondly, images possess the capability to evoke emotions, even the specific ones the images have been intended to elicit (Davis 1992: 4). This view is supported by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 118), whose use of the term *demand* argues that images that feature people who are facing the viewer and making eye contact with them are, in a way, establishing a relationship with the viewer and inviting them to have a connection or an emotional reaction to the image.

In this example, however, most of the people featured in the images are not making demands, but *offers* instead, which entail images where the action of looking is done by the viewer, inspecting the person in the image as if they were on display and subject to the

viewer's examination. The person in the image does not make eye contact, but often their faces are still detectable, even if not facing directly at the camera. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 119) The fact that most of the images in the post contain offers can promote viewing them as historical specimens, which are up for observation. The viewer is not invited to become involved in the action, but to observe it. Linking the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests creates a timeline presenting the way the social standing of black Americans has evolved over time. The viewer is encouraged to examine this timeline and observe and compare the similarities the two columns of images provide.

The prominent use of offers is further emphasized by the fact that in several photos where the participants are, in fact, facing the camera, they are wearing sunglasses, hindering the establishment of eye-contact with the viewer. People with sunglasses can be seen at the forefront of five photos out of 10. This also distances the viewer and the represented participants. The images situate the viewer as an observer, but prevent the creation of personal relationships with the represented participants and the viewer. In other words, the viewer is encouraged to relate to the general movements and groups more than the specific individuals that are depicted in the images.

Additionally, the *frame sizes* of the images also distance the viewer from the represented participants. The frame sizes vary between images in the post, ranging from a medium close shot at the closest (showing the participants from the waist up, e.g. on the second row of images) to a very long shot (showing all of the participants in a way that uses less than half of the height of the image, e.g. on the third row of images) (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 124). In terms of social distance between viewer and participants, at its closest the relationship between the two would be far social distance, which is defined as "the distance to which people move when somebody says "Stand away so I can look at you" (ibid.: 124-125). As a whole, the size of frame and the ensuing implied social distance also supports the representation that viewers are to remain on the outside, observing.

The *angles* of the images further support the positioning of the viewer as an outside observer. Angles provide a point of view from which the viewer observes the participants, and the selection of angle can establish power relations between the two. In this post, the angles in general are naturalistic, in other words, "[w]hat we observe here could also be

observed in reality". Naturalistic angles result in the viewer interpreting the images as realistic and help portray them as accurate events. Additionally, the viewer is placed on the same level as the participants, i.e. they are positioned on an equal level (not above nor below) in terms of status and power. A low angle would suggest superiority whereas a high angle would suggest submission, but the lack of such steep angles suggests equality and similarity, encouraging the viewer to relate to the depicted participants and their causes. (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 132, 140)

A closer examination of the angles in the post enables making further interpretations on the visual representations constructed by the images. The horizontal angles, which can evoke a sense of viewer involvement (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 134), support previous observations. By opting to produce an image where the viewer is faced with the participants, involvement is created, and in comparison placing viewer and represented participant at an oblique angle creates a sense of divergence and distance (ibid.). Another exemplification of this is located at the bottom row of images in the post, where a comparison is made between two images of protestors, holding the same signs decades apart. Particularly in the black and white image on the left, which portrays civil rights protestors, an oblique angle is presented, which enables the viewer to see several protestors but is not forced to face them directly and face-to-face. This creates a certain amount of distance as the participants in the image are making a demand and an offer, in a way, as they are looking at the viewer, but are doing so from an angle while facing their bodies away from the viewer. This establishes contact between participants and the viewer, while positioning the viewer to the sidelines, not beside the represented participants and as part of the activity they are engaged in.

In the final pair of images at the bottom of the post, the color image on the right also features oblique angles, but not quite as prominently as the photo on the left. Even though the participants are in the process of walking towards the camera and, as a result, the viewer, they are not facing it directly, but walking past it in a diagonal angle. The participants are making offers instead of demands, as they are not making eye-contact with the viewer. This lack of eye contact is emphasized by the man at the foreground of the image wearing sunglasses, which prevents the viewer from making eye-contact. Both the selection of angle and the presence of offers create distance between participants and

the viewer, a previously stated strategy of visually representing distance applied throughout the post.

An instance of visually representing race can also be detected in the first pair of images at the top of the post, in which both images portray a line of black protesters being met by white police officers. The two images visually represent the two groups of people as separate and different. This is most explicitly represented by the angle of the images, which places both groups (and races) on opposite sides of the frame, facing each other in opposition. This pair of images can be seen to most prominently represent conflict not only between the police and the protesters, but also between the races. Such representations can be interpreted to add race as one of the crucial issues being represented in the post, further connecting the shooting of Michael Brown to racism.

Detaching the viewer from the events and participants visible in the images can serve many functions and mere interpretations can be made on which functions motivated the use of such visual representations. In comparison, choosing an opposite strategy where the represented participants would make demands, while being photographed from a close distance whilst facing the camera would aid in evoking a stronger emotional reaction towards the individual protesters. However, the choice of presenting these particular images juxtaposed with each other in a distanced manner may be a method attempting to make the phenomenon of promoting civil rights and protesting police brutality become the main focus of the post. As the represented participants in the images are not being presented as the particular individuals the viewer should relate to, the viewer is provided with the opportunity to focus more on the cause the individual participants are protesting. Highlighting the represented the participants may have caused the viewer to overlook the broader historical and social context the post is attempting to convey: the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests are very similar, struggling against issues such as racism, violence and police brutality half a century apart. This message aids in creating an idea of no change being present in this respect within the American society, emphasizing the view of no progress being made.

Despite the various representations arising from the images in this post, text as a mode cannot be overlooked. Text is present in this post in several separate places: some can be

found in the images themselves (e.g. signs), the tags which are located at the top of the post, and at the bottom of the post featuring two lines of text containing one sentence each, which are comments added onto the post by Tumblr users. As the analysis of the post has focused on the images and the kinds of representations they convey, analyzing the textual portions within those images was found less important than analyzing the text added alongside the images when constructing the multimodal Tumblr post. As a result, the analysis of the linguistic representations of the post will focus on the tags and the comments of the post.

Linguistic representation

The tags at the top of the post, at the left hand side of the first black and white image, provide important contextual information for those who begin examining the post. In more general terms, tags are understood as "free-form labels chosen by the user, not selected from a controlled vocabulary" (Godwin-Jones, 2006: 8), which highlights the role of tags as labeling and categorizing the content of the post. The author's role in choosing the categorization words they feel as most crucial also influence the creation of tags. Since the post has not been given a headline, the viewer is required to determine what is depicted in the image solely based on the images' content and/or by examining the tags. In this particular example, the placement of the tags at the top of the post demonstrate to the viewer what the following post discusses. The following tags have been used:

> #ferguson
> #justice for michael brown
> #michael brown
> #civil rights movement
> #history repeats itself

These five tags provide crucial information on the key topic of the post. The first tag, "#ferguson", contextualizes half of the images of the post. As the events in Ferguson were widely reported on and discussed on news outlets and social media, the name of the city alone can be expected to evoke connotations in viewers, shifting their attention to anticipate content that is somehow related to the events in Ferguson, either the shooting of Michael Brown or the ensuing protests, on which the viewers are presupposed to have at

least some previous knowledge. However, contextualizing the post and highlighting its connection with the protests in Ferguson is done by the second and third tags: "#justice for michael brown" and "#michael brown". These tags explicitly refer to Michael Brown, which further highlights which event the post is discussing. Additionally, the second tag ("#justice for michael brown") states the author's stance on the shooting, i.e. that they view Brown as a victim. All in all, the tags ensure that those who know either the name of Brown or know what was occurring in Ferguson during the conception of the post would direct them to anticipate certain type of content from the following post.

While the first three tags provide contextualization by framing the following post as somehow related to the death of Michael Brown and the protests in Ferguson, the two final tags focus on the other half of the post's content, the civil rights movement. The fourth tag, "#civil rights movement", explicitly references the movement and connects it to the post. Viewers familiar with the movement and the events in Ferguson can, by examining these tags, anticipate content that features or even compares these two events. The viewers with little or no previous information on the events and movements behind the tags may not benefit from the contextualization provided by the them, but may instead utilize the tags in searching for information should they wish to know more on the topics featured in the post.

The final tag, "#history repeats itself", functions in directing the viewers' interpretations on what representations the post constructs, similarly to the tag "#justice", which displays the author's opinions on the matter, potentially directing the representations extracted by viewers as well.

As discussed above, utilizing these particular images in one post can be seen to represent similarity and encourage comparison between the images from two separate decades. This similarity of events and the repetitive need to protest police brutality, violence and racism can be represented linguistically with the aid of a sentence such as 'history repeats itself'. On the whole, the tags of the post provide contextual information concisely, with few words. The tags can even be considered to condense the main content and visual representations of the post into linguistic form, as the tags refer to the events that are

depicted in the photo, as well as a key representation of the post suggesting that history repeats itself.

The comments at the end of the post possess similar functions than the tags of the post, they also contextualize. The author of the first comment is the author of the original post, making the first comment not an addition to the post, but a description operating as an original element of the post.

The first comment states: 'Civil Rights Movement vs Ferguson Protests', which contains similar contextual information than the post's tags. The comment frames the images both in terms of time and location. It also functions as a caption, which are commonly placed below images, elaborating on the image's content. The comment can encourage viewing and interpreting the post through comparison, which is also represented visually by the images themselves.

The second comment at the bottom of the post features a link to a news story, which originally appeared on the Al-Jazeera website, but which has later been taken down. The comment itself states: "And tonight, the Missouri National Guard.", which can be assumed to refer to the information contained by the linked article, informing the reader of the support the Ferguson police got from the Missouri National Guard in confronting the protesters. This comment also functions as contextualization, but in a different manner than the first comment. While the first comment elaborated on the content of the post, potentially suggesting representations the viewer should extract, the second comment provides context in the form of additional information. The comment mentions the Missouri National Guard and references "tonight", leading the reader to assume that there has been recent participation from the National Guard in relation to the Ferguson protests. This comment, then, appears to be an active collaborative construction where more related information is added over time, causing it to remain an active post even though its original contents have remained the same.

Multimodal representation

The use of two modes, text and images, enables the production of different representations which, despite their differences, also support each other. Additionally, the use of text and images also enables each mode to convey representations which each mode conveys in the most approachable manner. For instance, text functions as a convenient mode for providing concise keywords and enabling viewers to find out more on the key topics discussed in the post. Tags were also used in this post as a method of providing keywords displaying the author's opinions ("justice for Michael Brown"), which can potentially guide the viewer's interpretations of the phenomena being depicted by images (i.e. viewing Brown's death as a racist crime). Additionally, text enables the condensation of the topic of the post, which can be read and interpreted quickly, promoting choosing this particular mode for executing these functions.

Utilizing text in the form of commentary enables the easy insertion of collaborative textual information, providing the post with additional up-to-date information that can aid in the post remaining current. While the tags provide the viewers with the author's opinion and stance on the content of the post, the caption at the bottom of the post also provides direction for the viewers' interpretations of the post. They are encouraged to compare and contrast the content of the images, which is also represented by the images.

Images, on the other hand, utilize their potential of evoking emotions, providing and highlighting visual comparisons and similarities as well as enabling the viewer be positioned in a certain manner in relation to the represented participants. The use of images with human figures in them increases the viewers' emotional investment in the post, which can be labeled an approach intended to make the post more thought provoking and personally significant to its viewers.

One pair of images, i.e. the one at the top of the post, can be seen to represent race by placing black protesters and white police officers opposite each other, creating otherness and conflict between the two groups. Such representations of race link to the aims of the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protesters, since both groups vocally opposed racism. Visually representing race in relation to the Ferguson protests also links it to the

shooting of Michael Brown, creating associations which conenct the shooting and racism, which can further encourage viewers to regard the shooting as an act of racism. Such links aid in connecting Brown's death onto a larger social scale, making it a socially significant event. As a result, the representations of the events in Ferguson aid in contributing to an active online discussion of race, which can be seen to make Tumblr a significant modern discussion forum for sharing observations, opinions and ideas on such socially significant topics.

The three basic functions of meaning-making modes (as summed up by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 15) (see section 3.4.2 for definition), provide further information on the way text and images function in this particular post. On the *ideational* level, both text and images represent the world as a place where not much progress is made in terms of issues such as racism and police brutality. The text states this explicitly ("history repeats itself") whereas the images create such representations due to similarity within the pairs of images taken decades apart.

The two modes also function *interpersonally*, i.e. they place people in certain ways in relation to each other. The images in particular represent the relations between the police and protesters as well as black and white people as conflicting and opposite, as they are visually represented as opposite. Text, on the other hand, functions on the interpersonal level by linking the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protesters in the comment below the images, which implies that the two groups are connected and similar.

 In this example, text and images fulfill the *textual* function in creating a cohesive text. The texts alone form a coherent unit since similar keywords are utilized (e.g. "Ferguson"). The text also creates a cohesive unit in connection with the images, as both encourage the viewer to compare the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests. As a result, the two modes together form a whole where some of the representations of both modes are shared.

As a whole, the modes in example 2 possess several functions and those functions operate on several different levels. Even though both modes can be viewed to have their own functions in constructing a multimodal post, one must acknowledge that the modes do not

function as separate. As mentioned above, the modes and their representations function together in creating a post where the interwoven representations result in a post which functions on several overlapping levels in comparing the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests. Examining both modes separately and, most importantly, together is required to extract the representations it creates.

Example 3: What a difference 50 years can make

To provide further comparisons, another similar post to the one examined above is presented in example 3 below. Similarly to the previous example, example 3 is also mainly constructed around images, even though text is also featured in the form of a comment at the bottom of the post. The post consists of ten images, five from the civil rights movement and five from the Ferguson protests. Considering the structure and content of the post, one can detect many similarities between examples 2 and 3. However, the two posts also feature differences, which will be explored below.

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Caption

what a difference 50 years can make
or not

Post Info

Posted on Thursday 14 August 2014.
8 months ago.
Filed under: #ferguson #michael brown

Notes: 148075

Example 3: Image post featuring five pairs of images comparing events from the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests

Visual representation

The structures of examples 2 and 3 are quite similar. Both posts contain pairs of images consisting of a black-and-white image from the civil rights movement and a color image from the Ferguson protests. Each pair features images with similar content, even though the images have been taken decades apart. The placement of these pairs of images varies between examples 2 and 3. In example 2 each pair of images was presented side by side, creating a vertical column of images from the civil rights movement, and a similar column for images from the Ferguson protests. In example 3, however, each pair of images is placed on top of each other, resulting in a post where all images create one long vertical column, and where every other image portrays the civil rights movement, alternating with images from the Ferguson protests. This difference in placement alters the reading paths of the two posts, in other words, "the likely way in which a reader will take in a visually complex text" (Ravelli 2008: 21).

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The *placement* of elements in both examples follows some known conventions. In a text, *the given* (what is already familiar or agreed-upon) is placed on the left hand side as the *new* (unfamiliar or not agreed-upon) is placed on the right (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 181). This placement of familiar and new information corresponds with the common Western reading path, progressing from left to right (Unsworth 2006: 69). In example 2, both images forming a pair are placed next to each other, and more specifically, in each pair the image on the left portrays civil rights movement, whereas the image on the right depicts the Ferguson protests. Placing the elements in this way supports viewing the left side of the image pairs as containing the given, i.e. the civil rights movement, a historical phenomenon known to many, as the right side of the image pairs contains the new in the form of images originating from the Ferguson protests.

By placing the elements in this manner, the reading path of the post first reminds readers of the events related to the civil rights movement and then progresses to displaying new, similar content from Ferguson, aiming to create a sense of similarity and promote comparison. The strategy of placement also highlights the images as pairs, as each pair of images formulates a visual sentence of sorts, the reading of which begins at the left side of the page, progressing to the right before the viewer moves on to the next visual sentence or image pair on the next horizontal line below.

In example 3, where the images are placed on top of each other, a similar reading path cannot be implemented. Even though the Western traditional reading path begins at the top and progresses to the bottom, the placement of elements in this post does not highlight the images as five pairs, but as a single, large entity. In addition, the reading path progressing from top to bottom emphasizes repetition and similarity of images placed on top of each other to represent likeness, even though the post contains no division of pairs from one another, which was the case in example 2. This hinders the placement of images in example 3 from utilizing the new/given-division. On the whole, both posts enable the viewer to detect repetition and similarity, which creates a similar interpretation on what is represented ("history repeats itself"), even though this is achieved with several ways of placing the images onto the post.

While example 2 features several *offers*, oblique *angles* and *frame sizes* promoting far social distance, similar phenomena can be detected in example 3 in a more prominent way. *Offers* (visible faces of the represented participants, with no eye-contact with the viewer) are utilized frequently in example 3. As most images have been taken from the viewpoint and angle of a passive bystander standing on the same level as the represented participants, while facing each other and not the viewer, the viewer does not directly face the represented participants. Even though several faces can be detected, they are often featured in a (semi-)profile, which, again, results in creating social distance between viewer and participants. The social distance remains vast and does not encourage the viewer to engage in a personal relationship with the represented participants.

Despite the prominence of offers, some *demands* are also present in example 3. For example, the third image from the top features a police officer directly facing the camera. However, the demand remains incomplete and it does not cause the emotion evoking effects of demands. This is caused by the frame size and obstructive elements in the image. The police officer's demand is obstructed by the helmet which shields his eyes, preventing emotion-evoking eye-contact with the viewer. Additionally, the frame size of the image also hinders the creation of a demand, as the police officer is photographed with a very long shot (i.e. the human figure occupies more than half the height of the frame), which promotes a public distance between viewer and participant, implying that the two are strangers and are to remain that way (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 124-125).

As a whole, visual representations in examples 2 and 3 contain similar representations aiming to construct personal distance between viewer and represented participants. As a result, the viewer can focus on the issues depicted and not the specific individuals in the images. In concrete terms, demands, offers, angles and frame sizes all contribute to constructing similar distancing visual representations. Through similarity and encouraged comparison, the viewer is urged to contemplate on the social issues of police brutality and racism, and the possible underlying reasons resulting in the reappearance of those issues 50 years apart. This visual representation suggesting historical repetition of social issues is also constructed linguistically, which will be examined below.

Linguistic representation

Even though example 3 is mostly constructed around images, the post also contains text which is used in tags and comments, similarly to example 2. The tags in both examples are quite similar, as they include keywords such as "#michael brown" and "#ferguson", enabling viewers to connect the material of the post with phenomena that are being currently discussed. However, example 3 does not feature any tags referencing the civil rights movement, which results in a lack of crucial contextualizing information. As a result, the post does not explicitly mention the civil rights movement and the viewer is to recognize the context of the black and white photos based on previous knowledge.

In comparison to the comment presented at the end of example 2, the comment found below the images in example 3 provides different linguistic representations to support the visual ones provided by the images. The comment states:

> what a difference 50 years can make
> or not

The comment reinforces the aspect of comparison already established by the images. As mentioned above, the comment nor the tags explicitly mention the civil rights movement, but the tag "#ferguson" and the comment's statement that events 50 years apart are being depicted by the images suggests that the black and white photos depict the civil rights movement, which was at its most active 50 years prior to the shooting of Michael Brown. Even though some viewers may be able to extract such representations even without the presence of keywords, some viewers may not be able to make such connections, resulting in a less impactful overall representations those viewers can extract from the post.

On the whole, text in both examples can be seen to function as a contextualizing element, which provides additional information related to the post, i.e. the images. The post's author or other Tumblr users who wish to add their own contribution to a post can add comments, which keeps the post relevant as new information can be inserted as it emerges. Text also offers viewers the opportunity to quickly examine the key topics of the

post or to utilize the key words, i.e. tags, to search for more related information concerning the same incidents, movements or phenomena being depicted by the post.

Even though text seems to carry a strong contextualizing function in these examples, one must acknowledge that a similar function is also carried by the images of the post. Similarly, the multimodal construction resulting from the use of both text and images constructs an informative entity, the execution of which requires input from all modes. The multimodal representations of example 3 are discussed in more detail below.

Multimodal representation

Multimodality in example 3 constructs a multifaceted post in which the use of several modes supports the overall meaning being constructed, i.e. that the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests display how little progress has been made in the treatment of black Americans over time. Framing the shooting of Michael Brown and the Ferguson protests by connecting them with the civil rights movement frames both events as parts of a broader issue of racism and police brutality, causing them not to appear as isolated, but as continuation of similar incidents which have occurred over several decades.

The protests in Ferguson are represented as oppositions between protestors and police officers, which have been framed through a similar polarized dichotomy present during the civil rights movement when protestors and police officers faced each other in similar situations and in similar ways. These representations arise both visually (e.g. angles placing police officers and protesters opposite to one another) and linguistically (e.g. "civil rights movement vs. Ferguson protests"). Additionally, due to the relatively young audiences such posts on social networking sites may reach, the post can function as a reminder to such young viewers about the causes of the civil rights movement by framing it as similar with the current events of Ferguson.

Example 3 utilizes multimodality in executing the three basic semiotic functions each mode is believed to fulfill. Due to the similarity of examples 2 and 3, the functions of text and images in relation to the two examples also remain quite similar. On the *ideational*

level, images and text function in example 3 as representing the lack of progress being made in terms of racism and police brutality in the US. White police officers and black protesters are placed opposite one another both visually and linguistically, highlighting the strained relationship between the two groups, which also fulfills the *interpersonal* function of the post.

Both text and images fulfill the *textual* function in creating one, cohesive unit. For example, visually, the black and white images share a similar color quality which groups them as a single unit of visual representation. A similar quality of possessing color groups the images from Ferguson together. The placement of images side by side encourages comparison and visually represents the historical presence of ongoing struggles with police brutality and racism, while simultaneously emphasizing the images as a single, cohesive unit, a collection of similar images depicting the same issues. As mentioned above, text also encourages the comparison, further adding to the textual function of both modes in constructing a post with a single, clear message: history repeats itself.
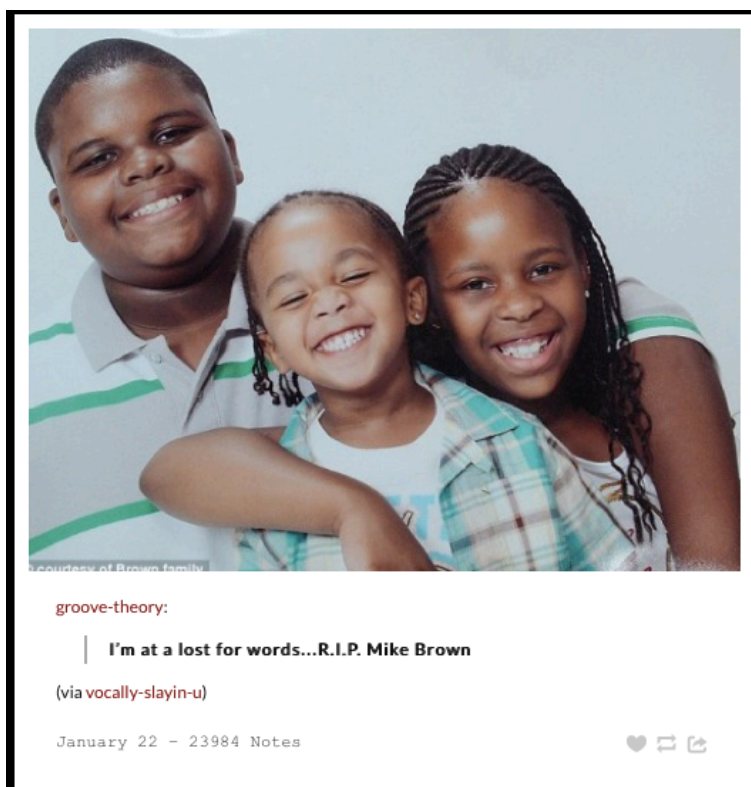
In the next section, the multimodal representations of the shooting of Michael Brown are examined from a more personal standpoint. The section examines two Tumblr posts, which utilize family photos of the Brown family in representing the shooting.

5.3 The use of personal photos

The image selections made by Tumblr users when creating posts on Michael Brown provide further insights into the visual representations that are constructed of Brown and his shooting. In my data, several posts utilized personal photos of Brown and his family, and in this section some of those posts will be analyzed to analyze not only the meanings that arise from the use of such posts, but also the functions those images have in creating multimodal representations of Michael Brown.

Example 4: Michael Brown and his siblings

The first example of a post containing family photos is presented in example 4 below, which features two modes: image (a family photo) and text (a comment below the image). The image is a professionally taken photo of Michael Brown (pictured on the left) with his brother and sister, which is indexed, for instance, by the blank, white backdrop of the image and the camera-facing, smiling depiction of three young siblings. In other words, the image can be assumed to be a family photo, a professionally taken one in particular.

groove-theory:

I'm at a lost for words...R.I.P. Mike Brown

(via vocally-slayin-u)

January 22 – 23984 Notes

Example 4: Post featuring a family photo of Michael Brown (left) with his brother and sister

Visual representation

The post does not have a headline or any other element preceding the image, resulting in the image being the element viewers encounter first. The lack of a headline or other contextualizing element can aid viewers to focus on the content of the image, as their gaze is likely to be directed at the image while there are no other elements to distract them. Not disclosing that the image portrays Brown with his siblings, e.g. via a headline, and merely

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providing the image for observation does not explicitly connect the image with the events in Ferguson. By providing an image for the viewers to examine instead of sharing contextualization beforehand may cause more viewers to examine the image closer with a more open attitude, since examining the photo is not initially affected by the viewers' previous ideas and opinions relating to Brown's death.

Analyzing the content of the image unveils several elements which construct visual representations of Brown. Most prominently, the functions of utilizing an image where Brown is with his siblings is worth analyzing. The *image selection* provides personal context in relation to Brown's represented identity. Representing Brown with images where he is on his own promotes viewing him as an individual, an isolated character whose connections to other people are not displayed, resulting in a dehumanizing representation. However, representing Brown through images where he is with his siblings connects him with other people, his family in particular. As a result, it becomes easier for viewers to consider Brown as a part of a family and as someone's brother. This relates his death to the grief of his family and potentially increases the probability of viewers relating empathetically to Brown's death. As a result, Brown does not remain as an unknown thug, but becomes a more tangible and well-rounded person as he is represented as someone's brother. Additionally, the use of an image such as this aids in framing the broader social issue of police brutality to families, children and parents, providing a broader contextualization to the phenomenon, bringing it closer to the lives of ordinary people.

The image selection seems to have favored utilizing an emotion-evoking image in comparison to an image with a high informational value. Even though the comment at the bottom of the post mentions Michael Brown by name, quite a bit of previous information on Brown, e.g. recognizing him due to having seen images of him previously, is required. Those who may not have heard of Brown or do not recognize his face despite knowing his name and what happened to him may find the image vague, as Brown is not explicitly indicated from the image. He is positioned at the left hand side of the image, instead of placing him in the center, a position where the most important element in an image is commonly placed (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 196). As a result, Brown's position as a non-central element in the image suggests that the functions of the image as evoking

empathy towards the Brown family are more significant than providing the viewers with an image from which Brown is easily identified and is the most important represented participant in.

The image also utilizes *demands*, i.e. the people in the image are facing the viewer and making eye contact, to bring the family personally closer to the viewer. Demands help establish an emotional connection between the viewer and the represented participants in the image, as well as aid the viewer to make a personal emotional investment with the represented participants, which can increase the sense of empathy felt by the viewer. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 119) Even though making a demand can be seen as a standard practice in taking professional family photographs such as the image in the post, the effect of those demands in forcing the viewer to face the represented participants on a personal and emotional level may have influenced the author of the post to choose this image in particular.

The *facial expressions* of the people in the image also urge the viewer to experience conflicting emotions. All three people in the image are smiling, which signals happiness amongst the represented participants. A strong contradiction is created when one also considers the context of the photo, which depicts a young man who was recently killed and whose family is now in mourning, suggesting that the young man in the photo could have lived a long, happy life with his siblings had he not been shot. The juxtaposition of the facial expressions of the represented participants and the viewers' knowledge on what happened to one of the represented participants (which is provided by the comment below the image) is prone to create an emotional reaction in the viewers, making the image more memorable and emotionally influential than a photo featuring Michael Brown alone.

The three people in the image also possess a sense of *similarity* and *togetherness*, which further creates emotional conflict when paired with contextual information on Brown's death. All three people are wearing similar colors and possess similar traits of physical appearance, such as skin color and similar facial features (e.g. noses), which represent their likeness and family relations. This can encourage the viewer to regard all three people as a unit, a group of siblings. Again, this representation of the image portraying a

cohesive unit of similar people who are close to one another is juxtaposed with the larger context of the photo, in which the unified group is known to be broken due to the death of one of the siblings.

Linguistic representation

Example 4 features text in the form of a comment added onto the end of the post. The text also contributes to creating representations, particularly in connection to the ones constructed by the image. The comment at the end of the post states:

> I'm at a lost for words…R.I.P. Mike Brown

The comment mentions Brown by name, calling him 'Mike' instead of 'Michael'. This choice of address adds an effect of colloquialism and reduces personal distance between Brown and the author, as if they were close enough to address one another in such a way. Additionally, the comment begins with "I'm at a lost for words" (in the post the phrase is misspelled, replacing the expression "I'm at a loss for words"), which emphasizes the personal feelings of the writer, making the writer the subject of the sentence. Finally, the letters 'R.I.P.' (rest in peace), precede Brown's name, providing an indisputable representation that someone named Michael Brown has passed away. Thus, a connection is constructed which links the people in the image with the text's representations suggesting that a death has occurred, which has shocked the author of the post. The coexistence of image and text suggest that the two are linked, and viewers are likely to interpret that one of the people in the image is, in fact, Michael Brown, who has passed away.

As mentioned above in relation to the visual representations of the post, the text alongside the image aids in creating juxtaposition. The happy family image clashes quite strongly with the comment, announcing the death of one of the people being depicted by the image. The multimodal representations arising from the interplay of text and images in the post will be discussed in more detail below.

Multimodal representation

Analyzing the additional representations created by both the image and the text highlight the creation and effects of multimodal representations. The image represents three young people as a similar, cohesive family unit. Simultaneously, the text below the image provides the writer's short, personal reaction regarding the death of Michael Brown. These two modes together create additional representations, which enable and encourage the viewers to form an emotional reaction towards the people in the photo, whereas the text provides the shocked reaction of the post's author signifying that one of the happy people in the image is dead. The two modes provide conflicting information, juxtaposing family values and happiness with the unexpected death of a young man. As a result, the post is prone to create uneasiness in its viewers, enabling the creation of an emotional reaction, which makes the post in its entirety more memorable.

The functions of the two modes present in the post, images and text, are worth elaborating on in terms of the three main functions all modes fulfill. These functions highlight the importance of both modes in creating a multimodal post with the complex meanings that are constructed in example 4.

The *ideational* function, entailing the worldview provided by an instance of discourse, is constructed with both text and images. The happy family image provides the three siblings a group identity of similarity and cohesion as a group. As most viewers can be assumed to have at least some knowledge and emotional reactions to approaching family, the image is able to evoke stronger emotions in viewers. The text, on the other hand, functions ideationally by depicting the loss of a sibling and a family member, and by labeling such loss as shocking. Text also specifically identifies the family from which one member has been lost, and aids more particular identification by naming "Mike Brown", a name which certainly aided many in connecting the people in the image with the shooting of Michael Brown.

Both text and images also function *interpersonally* in this post, resulting in the creation of similar representations that the ideational function of both modes did. Images function interpersonally by constructing a close social relationship between the three siblings. Their

happy facial expressions and shared visual features highlight their togetherness and similarity, as well as their happiness in being a part of such a similar group. Text, on the other hand represents social relations by displaying the shock of the comment's author in reacting to Brown's death, which provides the viewers with an opportunity to relate similarly.

Finally, the multimodal post functions *textually* by constructing a cohesive unit featuring two modes, image and text. The image constructs cohesion with similar traits in the represented participants' appearance and, for example, through their similar clothing. These factors result in a visual representation of a cohesive family photo. Text, on the other hand, constructs cohesion by naming one of the people in the image as "Mike Brown". This contextualizes the entire post, and most importantly, links the author's shocked reaction of a person's death with the preceding family photo, resulting in the emotional conflict the modes create together.

As a whole, this multimodal post utilizes framing, which consists of selection and composition (see Carvalho 2008: 169 for the production of texts) of various material and elements in constructing a cohesive post. Through framing, the author of a Tumblr post is able to select a certain point of view in approaching, for example, the death of Michael Brown, by framing Brown's death as the loss of a family. By selecting the sibling photo and the short written comment displaying shock over Brown's death while actively composing a single post from these emotionally conflicting materials, the death of Brown is framed from a far more personal viewpoint than viewing the death as an isolated death of an unidentified man. Through multimodality the viewer is brought emotionally closer to the shock of the post's creator as well as the grief of the Brown family.

My data also contains another example featuring the use of family photos in representing Michael Brown. This example will be analyzed in more detail before.

Example 5: The Browns' Thanksgiving

Another example presenting the use of family photos in constructing representations of Michael Brown can be seen in example 5 below. With the aid of this example, further observations can be made on the way family photos function as creators of visual representations, as they aid in constructing multimodal Tumblr posts representing the shooting of Michael Brown from the viewpoint of his family.

Example 5: Post containing a screenshoted tweet with a picture of the Brown family and a comment

Example 5 contains redistributed, pre-existing online material from another social networking site, Twitter. Even though such redistributions have been briefly discussed before (see section 2.2), some further analysis of this kind of Tumblr post is required to understand the multifaceted representations this particular post crafts. The post contains both text and images. It consists of a tweet featuring text and an image, which has been screenshoted (i.e. captured as an image from its original source) and then redistributed as an image post on Tumblr. The tweet contains text in the form of a sentence above the

image providing contextualization ("Mike Brown's family with empty chair. RIP Mike.") describing what the image below contains. More text has been added onto the post when the multimodal tweet was added onto Tumblr. A comment at the bottom of the post provides the date when the image in the photo was taken ("November 27"), as well as "RIP Mike Brown", providing further contextualization for the post.

The way the Tumblr post is constructed by capturing a tweet acts as an example of how, at times, the role of the author on Tumblr is relatively minimal. The author's voice is not the sole focus of the post, e.g. in this example the only contributions made by the author of the Tumblr post are capturing and redistributing the tweet and adding the contextualizing comment at the very end of the post. The author does not reveal anything about their identity or personal opinions, besides displaying sympathy for the Brown family by crafting the comment stating "RIP Mike Brown". This highlights how on Tumblr posts are often constructed whilst aiming to produce or even redistribute content the author feels other Tumblr users would wish to see. New content which would specifically highlight the specific author's personal voice or opinions is at times seen as unnecessary, which is portrayed by example 5.

Visual representation

Even though the post features two modes, image and text, the image attracts the most attention, which is due to the image's high *salience*. For example, it is wider than the text surrounding it and proportionally takes up the most space, making the image seem like the main content of the post. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 177) Additionally, the image features people, which increases the psychological salience of the image, attracting the viewers' attention (ibid.: 63). Since the post most prominently features a redistributed tweet, Twitter's layout which contains empty space to make reading easier can also encourage viewers to examine the post more carefully, as the tweet appears larger. Since the post only contains five lines of text and a photo, viewers may be encouraged to take a closer look as reading all the text and examining the photo can be done relatively quickly.

Structurally, both Tumblr posts featuring the use of family photos (examples 4 and 5) are very similar. In both posts, the image itself is the largest element, making it the most prominent part of the posts. The images do not provide enough contextual cues for most viewers to identify the content and the context of the images, which is why the use of multiple modes and the addition of text is required to connect the images to the shooting of Michael Brown. In example 4, creating juxtaposition with the happy togetherness of the image and the saddening context provided by the text were utilized in creating juxtaposition, whereas example 5 provides an image which supports the emotionally negative message of the adjacent contextualizing text, but creates juxtaposition by featuring references to Thanksgiving, an American holiday which is often connected with happy emotions and spending time with one's family.

This further contextualization and juxtaposition resulting from the post being framed around Thanksgiving, an American holiday often associated with family values, togetherness and giving thanks for the positive aspects of one's life, are worth exploring. Thanksgiving is visually indexed in the image, for example, by portraying a family meal with a turkey on the table. The comment below the image states the date when the photo was taken (November 27), which was the date of Thanksgiving in 2014, the year of Brown's death. Even though to some audiences, such as Americans, the date or the family meal with turkey on the table are prone to easily index Thanksgiving, and thus, create representations of an incomplete family-oriented holiday due to the loss of a family member, other audiences may extract different meanings from the post. To others, the post's cues towards depicting Thanksgiving may go overlooked since the holiday is only celebrated in the United States. However, since family meals are common in a myriad of cultures, a representation of a family meal being incomplete due to the loss of a family member can still evoke similar emotions in those who do not celebrate Thanksgiving as in those who do.

Brown's centrality as a represented participant in the image is emphasized by *vectors*, imaginary lines, leading the viewer's gaze (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 204) between elements within an image. Several represented participants are facing the chair in the middle of the image, which is draped with a t-shirt featuring a picture of Michael Brown. These vectors construct, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 67), a reactional

process. The participants facing the empty chair are *reacters*, making the empty chair and the t-shirt the *phenomenon.* In other words, the Brown family seems to be centered around their sad reactions of Michael Brown's death and the fact that he is missing from their family holiday. The central placement of the empty chair and the t-shirt can represent "the nucleus in the photo", suggesting that Brown's empty chair and the t-shirt with his photo on it are central, informative elements of the image (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 196). As a result, Michael Brown is represented as a central character in the image, even though he is not physically present

While example 4 utilized a photo where the represented participants made distinct demands by facing the camera and making eye-contact with the viewer, the image in example 5 features *offers*, which refers to images where the represented participants do not make eye-contact with the viewer even though their faces are visible (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 119). In comparison to demands, which encourage the viewer to engage with the represented participants emotionally as a type of social relationship is established between the two, offers merely provide an opportunity for the viewer to inspect the represented participants from the sidelines, which promotes a longer social distance.

Even though the offers in example 5 encourage the viewer to remain an outsider in relation to the Brown family's Thanksgiving, the *angle* of the image positions the viewer as if they were a part of their Thanksgiving. These two aspects together create juxtaposition in which the viewer is invited to take part in a family-oriented holiday, but through the image's lack of demands, for example, they are not directly acknowledged by the participants. This results in the representation that the Browns' Thanksgiving is displayed to the viewer in an open manner from the inside, but the viewer is not acknowledged or asked to participate, but to follow the represented participants in acknowledging that Michael Brown is a central person missing from the family holiday.

Linguistic representation

Even though the image acts as the main content of the post, text also plays a role in creating linguistic representations, which provide their input into the overall construction

of representations in the post. The text preceding the image mentions "Mike Brown's family", providing the viewer with contextualization and information on what the image depicts. The text also contains the phrase 'RIP Mike', suggesting that the family in the picture has recently lost a family member, even if the viewer is not familiar with Brown's death per se. This is further emphasized visually by the empty chair in the image, featuring Michael Brown's picture on a t-shirt, suggesting that the "Mike Brown" the text refers to is also represented in the image, creating coherence within the post.

As mentioned above, Michael Brown's name is mentioned in both texts preceding and following the image. Mentioning his name several times in the textual portions of the post also highlight his central role, reinforcing viewing him as "the nucleus" of the post. The same representation is also constructed visually by placing the empty chair and the t-shirt containing Brown's photo at the center of the entire image.

Even though text is most prominently visible both above and below the image, some text is also present in the image itself. Two t-shirts in the image, one draped over the chair in the center of the image and one being worn by the man standing beside the empty chair, feature text: "gone to[o] soon" and "justice". These two small excerpts of text provide additional contextualizing words, which have been selected as crucial enough by the Brown family to be added onto t-shirts and to be displayed at their Thanksgiving dinner. "Gone to[o] soon" represents the loss of the family, which is also mirrored by the representations created by the entire image. "Justice", on the other hand, presents the family's views on the incident that resulted in Michael Brown's death, i.e. that the shooting was an unjust incident in relation to which justice should be served.

As mentioned above, the textual portions of the post function in many ways as providing similar representations that the image constructs visually. The multimodal representations arising from the use of these two modes together are examined in more detail below.

Multimodal representation

As a whole, this particular post employs both text and images as modes to frame the death of Michael Brown as a sad family event, which casts a dark shadow on the family's Thanksgiving, a holiday commonly connected to celebrating positivity and traditional family values. Juxtaposing visual representations of happiness and linguistically representing loss and grief are present in both examples, but the representations of example 5 yet provide a different take on multimodally creating such representations.

From a general perspective, the image in example 5 evokes emotions and by creating visual representations with the aid of vectors, angles, offers and visual icons indexing Thanksgiving and family togetherness. Text, on the other hand, constructs linguistic representations, for example, by utilizing Michael Brown's name, even in the colloquial and personally closer form "Mike", as a method of bringing his death and his broken family closer to the viewers. Phrases such as "gone to[o] soon" and "justice" provide a voice for the Brown family, representing their grief linguistically. The phrases also provide the viewer with a reaction which to apply to viewing the death of Brown.

As mentioned above, the juxtaposition of family, Thanksgiving, grief and loss with the aid of multimodality create emotional reactions in the viewers and bring Brown's death closer to them. By visually being invited to observe the Browns' Thanksgiving meal, the viewer can make comparisons to their own family meals to detect how incomplete the Brown family has become due to Michael Brown's shooting. By framing the shooting through Michael Brown's family is, again, more humanizing and provides the viewers with the opportunity to empathize with his family and to view Brown as the victim of a crime.

Some further insight into the functions of modes in example 5 can be gained by examining them from the viewpoint of the three main functions all modes fulfill. First, the *ideational* function of images in this post is executed by representing a family. Indexing Thanksgiving and portraying a group of people gathered around a table all suggest that a family is being observed. The family's identity is also constructed by the text, through the text found on the two t-shirts in the image. These texts display the family's opinions on Brown's death and, alongside the images, provide a glimpse into the emotional state of the

represented participants, even though the visual representations crafted by the image already provide the viewers with a glimpse into the grief the family is experiencing.

The *interpersonal* function is also realized by both modes in the post. The image constructs social relations by presenting a family who shares a meal on a holiday. However, the image also depicts the family as incomplete and in grief. These social relations between the family and the family member who is missing construct an emotion-evoking representation on the family's dynamics. The image's angles place the viewer as a silent participant at the family dinner, representing closeness and encouraging the creation of a personal reaction by the viewer. Additionally, text functions on the interpersonal level in bridging the gap between Tumblr users and the Brown family. The two instances of "RIP Mike Brown" provide the reactions of a Twitter and Tumblr user is voicing their reactions to Brown's death, bringing the shooting and its implications closer to them, as well as the viewers who examine the post without contributing.

Finally, the *textual* function of both text and images is fulfilled by the creation of a cohesive post, where the grief represented by the represented participants in the image corresponds with the anguished reactions provided by a Twitter and a Tumblr users, which are expressed textually both above and below the image.

One can argue that without multimodality posts presented in examples 4 and 5 would lose much of their representations. Since the images themselves act as tools for evoking emotions by framing Brown's death from the perspective of his family, a new humanized representation of Brown is crafted, promoting the viewers to empathize. In both posts images function as tools for evoking emotion and sympathy, whereas text is used as brief elements of contextualization, acting from the sidelines where the images are intended to attract the viewer's attention and evoke emotional reactions. Text also enables the creation of brief statements on the reactions to Brown's death from the perspective of the author's of the Tumblr posts. As a result, the use of these two modes is able to condensate personal reactions, condolences and contextualization into concise textual units, whereas the images attract attention and aim to ignite an emotional reaction in the viewer.

Despite these multiple modes can be seen to carry certain functions, one must note that they overlap and intertwine in creating a cohesive multimodal unit where the functions of each mode cannot be separated in a clear manner. Both text and images in both examples can be seen to provide information, empathy and emotional reactions, which causes the posts to function in a cohesive manner.

In the next section, a different approach to representing the shooting of Michael Brown is provided. A post comparing the media representations of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (one of the brothers behind the Boston Marathon Bombing) and Michael Brown are compared. These representations are further examined below to gain further understanding on how this post multimodally represents the shooting of Michael Brown.

5.4 Comparing media representations

Michael Brown's death and the following protests were closely monitored and extensively discussed both on traditional media and on Tumblr. As a result, many Tumblr users detected stark differences between information distributed on Tumblr and mainstream media, e.g. newspapers and television news reports. Since information on the events in Ferguson was scarce and often distributed from one person to the next, the presence of verified, objective information was inadequate. As a result, Tumblr users began creating posts discussing the media representations that were crafted of Brown. Even though the specific term "representation" was not utilized by the posts, their common intention was to juxtapose the different linguistic representations through which mainstream media constructed meanings on Brown's identity. These posts encouraged viewers to contemplate on the underlying reasons for such representations, which were even suggested to result from racism. In this section, one such post from my data will be analyzed to examine both the representations created by the media texts the post presents, as well as the multimodal representations constructed by the entire post.

Example 6: Comparing the media representations of Michael Brown and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev

People in Cambridge thought of 19-year-old Dzhokhar Tsarnaev – "Jahar" to his friends – as a beautiful, tousle-haired boy with a gentle demeanor, soulful brown eyes and the kind of shy, laid-back manner that "made him that dude you could always just vibe with," one friend says. He had been a captain of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin wrestling team for two years and a promising student. He was also "just a normal American kid," as his friends described him, who liked soccer, hip-hop, girls; obsessed over *The Walking Dead* and *Game of Thrones*; and smoked a copious amount of weed.
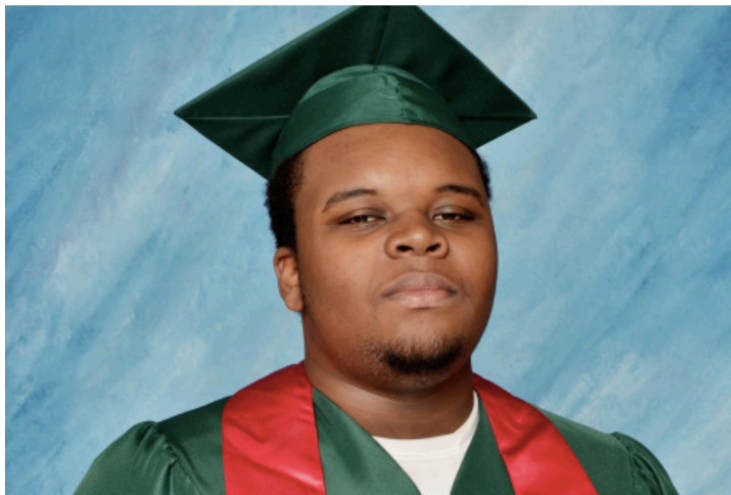
Michael Brown, 18, due to be buried on Monday, was no angel, with public records and interviews with friends and family revealing both problems and promise in his young life. Shortly before his encounter with Officer Wilson, the police say he was caught on a security camera stealing a box of cigars, pushing the clerk of a convenience store into a display case. He lived in a community that had rough patches, and he dabbled in drugs and alcohol. He had taken to rapping in recent months, producing lyrics that were by turns contemplative and vulgar. He got into at least one scuffle with a neighbor.

Example 6: Image and text post comparing written media representations of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and Michael Brown

One particular post discussing the representations of Michael Brown in the media (see example 6 above) utilizes comparison between written media descriptions of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (who committed the Boston Marathon bombings with his brother on 13 April 2013) and Michael Brown. Both texts have a journalistic origin: Tsarnaev's originates from the Rolling Stone while Brown's originally appeared in the New York Times. The Tumblr post is constructed by first providing a photo of Tsarnaev and an excerpt from his written description, followed by Brown's photo and en excerpt his description. The images were selected and added by the author of the Tumblr post to visually represent the people that are being textually described. Different images were used in the original magazine and newspaper articles, which highlights the image selections as ones being made specifically to serve the purposes of the Tumblr post. Placing the two images and relatively short paragraphs of text on top of one another promotes comparison due to composition and visual similarity of the elements. Comparing the media representations of the two young men encourages the viewer to detect differences and contemplate what may have motivated such stark differences in representation.

The post was originally created as an extension of a social media movement, which is stated in a comment at the bottom of the post. It refers to a Twitter movement called #iftheygunnedmedown, which encouraged African-American Twitter users to contemplate what kind of visual representation the media would construct of them if they became the victims of police brutality. People who participated tweeted two photos of themselves, utilizing the Twitter the same keyword, the hashtag "#iftheygunnedmedown" to indicate their participation. The two photos people posted often portrayed the person in a very positive and a very negative way, e.g. one photo depicted them graduating college or spending time with their family whereas the other presented them drunk or looking unfriendly. The movement aimed to criticize the media of selecting photos portraying police brutality victims in an overly negative manner.

Acting as an extension of the #iftheygunnedmedown-movement, the Tumblr post presented in example 6 aims to similarly explore how Brown, the victim of police brutality, is negatively represented while Tsarnaev, the bomber, is represented from a more positive perspective, potentially suggesting a racial bias in describing people in the media.

Linguistic representation

Examining the *selection* and *composition* of information in the descriptions provides insight into what information the author saw as significant. Selection entails the "inclusion and exclusion of facts, opinions, value judgements, etc." whereas composition involves the "arrangement of these elements in order to produce a certain meaning" (Carvalho 2008: 169). The two descriptions have selected quite different facts of Brown and Tsarnaev to represent them. For example, Tsarnaev's description begins with a description of his appearance, which spans over almost half of the length of the whole paragraph.

Describing Tsarnaev's appearance can create humanizing representations, especially as it involves mostly positive word choices such as 'beautiful' and 'soulful', which evoke positive connotations. Such description of Tsarnaev's appearance can also encourage readers to empathize with him. Reading about his pleasing looks can aid in humanizing him, as he is provided with permanent, physical qualities in a positive manner. This is reinforced by the image selected for the post, which also constructs a representation of Tsarnaev as a friendly young man. As a result, selecting such information to construct a description around positive attributes creates positive representations. The composition of such linguistic representations alongside an image in which Tsarnaev appears friendly creates a representation contesting people's likely negative, previous connotations on him resulting from his involvement in a bombing.

Brown's description, however, features no information on his appearance, but focuses on reporting what he had done during his life. The lack of description on Brown's appearance can be interpreted as a dehumanizing representational tactic, where he is represented only through his actions, which prevents the creation of a more well-rounded representation.

Additionally, selecting information that focuses on his negative background and actions ("he was caught on a security camera stealing", "[h]e lived in a community that had rough patches") results in the creation of mostly negative representations and connotations throughout the text.

The selection of content in the two descriptions is also reflected in the representation of normal. In Tsarnaev's description his friends are labeled as having described him as "just a normal American kid", whereas Brown's description utilizes sources such as the police in describing him as someone who was recently caught stealing. The selection of quoting Tsarnaev's friends links him to other people, which represents him as a likeable person with friends and a part of a broader, all-American community. Brown, on the other hand, is represented as isolated whose friends or family are not mentioned, nor quoted in stating his status as a normal young American. This aspect of selection further humanizes Tsarnaev, while dehumanizing Brown.

The *word choices* of both descriptions aid in creating further linguistic representations. According to Carvalho (2008: 168), the vocabulary of a text constructs a certain reality and acts as a vital part of constituting meanings. As mentioned above, Tsarnaev's description contains a myriad of positive words, e.g. in relation to his appearance. He is described, among other things, as "beautiful", "tousle-haired" and "promising" as a student. These word choices highlight the kind of personality he has, which is a relatively permanent aspect of a human being. The frequent use of positive adjectives highlights that Tsarnaev's innate personality is positive.

In comparison, the vocabulary of Brown's description features negative words, resulting in negative representations. Brown is described, among other things, as "stealing", "pushing" a clerk and his rap lyrics are described as "vulgar". These word choices contain exclusively negative connotations, resulting in negative overall representations. Additionally, most of the negative word choices involve verbs, which result in representing Brown in a negative manner particularly by describing his actions. As a result of such word choices, Tsarnaev's actions (i.e. the Boston bombing) are more prone to be represented as an abnormal activity to an otherwise friendly, normal young man,

whereas Brown's actions (i.e. being shot by the police) are represented as a natural progression following his previous tendency to engage in illegal activity.

Some vocabulary is utilized in both Tsarnaev's and Brown's description, but result in creating different representations. Both are described, for example, as enjoying hip-hop and using drugs. In Tsarnaev's description he is labeled as "just a normal American kid", even though he immigrated into America, and became an American citizen a year before the Boston bombing. This particular label seemingly attempts to provide Tsarnaev with the marker of being all-American and ordinary, which humanizes him further as his similarity with other Americans is highlighted. This description of normalcy is followed by a list of traits that are represented as something a normal American teenager possesses, he is described to like hip-hop and to have "smoked a copious amount of weed".

In contrast, in Brown's description the community he lived in is labeled as one with "rough patches". He is also described as someone who "dabbled in drugs" and was interested in rapping, while his rap lyrics are deemed "by turns contemplative and vulgar". In Brown's case, using drugs and having an interest in hip-hop are both linked to negative vocabulary, which represents both activities as abnormal and negative.

Finally, choice of vocabulary also aids in representing Tsarnaev and Brown in terms of age and responsibility. Tsarnaev is described as "a kid" or a "boy", whereas Brown is not. He is referred to as possessing both problems and promise "in his young life". During Brown's death and Tsarnaev's involvement in the Boston bombings Brown was 18 and Tsarnaev 19. Yet, Tsarnaev is labeled a kid while Brown is not. These word choices also humanize Tsarnaev, and may also encourage the reader to view him as less responsible for his actions, due to being "a kid". Kids in a modern Western society are commonly viewed as being allowed to make mistakes and being less responsible for the actions as adults. Such a representation could aim to shift potential blame off of Tsarnaev in relation to his involvement in the Boston bombing.

Not representing Brown as a boy or a kid creates further dehumanizing representations. If Brown were represented as a kid, his death would seem more unjust, as killing a child is

commonly viewed as deplorable. By representing Brown as a "not-boy", his death can be portrayed as a more justified reaction to Brown's alleged theft.

As a whole, word choices, alongside selection and composition of information selected to construct such descriptions all provide their input into the creation of linguistic representations. The two images in the post also contribute to the creation of representations, which are explored below.

Visual representation

In the post, each written description is preceded by a photo of the person being described, which have been added by the author of the Tumblr post. The original newspaper and magazine articles on both young men contained different images[6]. Analyzing the images that were selected to construct this post provides more information on what kind of visual representations are created.

Both images have been taken in similar situations: Brown's is quite clearly a graduation photo, as he is wearing a cap and a gown, attire which indexes a graduation ceremony. Tsarnaev's photo could also be a graduation photo as he is wearing dark, official looking clothes, potentially a graduation gown. He also has a red flower on his gown, an accessory rarely used with everyday clothes by young American men, but something worn during celebrations, for example as a graduation ceremony.

Structurally, both images feature a similar *frame size* as both men are presented through close-ups, i.e. from a close personal distance. This suggests that the viewer could or should observe the two as if they were acquaintances or even friends. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 124-125) This promotes the creation of an emotional reaction in the viewers.

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[6] Tsarnaev's magazine profile featured a close-up image of his face featuring a similar hint of a smile as the image in the Tumblr post. The newspaper article on Brown contained one small, blurry image of his face, and another equally blurry image depicting Brown with his friend Brandon Lewis jokingly shaking hands.

The *angle* of both images also implies that the viewer should examine the two young men as his/her equal. In both images the viewer and the represented participants are on the same level, i.e. the angle of the images is not looking up nor down on them. This promotes a sense of involvement and equality in terms of social status between the viewer and the represented participants and furthers the images' encouragement for the viewer to feel a personal, equal relationship towards Brown and Tsarnaev. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 131) The images also position the viewer to face the represented participants head on, increasing the sense of involvement, denoting them as a part of the viewer's world (ibid., 136).

This stance of involvement and personal closeness are further highlighted by the presence of *demands* in both pictures. Both men are facing the camera and making eye contact with the viewer, demanding the viewer to form personal, emotional relationship with them (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 151, 250). By making explicit demands, the viewer does not remain an undetected bystander, but is invited to interact with Brown and Tsarnaev. This brings the represented participants closer to the viewer and aids them to examine the images from a more emotionally involved standpoint. This increases the probability of the post influencing the viewer on a more personal level, making the post more influential.

Even though the two images feature many similar structural elements, a crucial difference can be detected in the *facial expressions* the images portray. Tsarnaev has a slight smile on his face, causing him to appear easy to approach and friendly. Brown, however, is looking quite stern and serious, causing him to seem more distant and unfriendly. These different facial expressions position the two young men quite differently. They bring Tsarnaev closer to the viewer in terms of creating a emotional, personal relationship between viewer and represented participant, whereas an opposite, distancing reaction results from Brown's stern expression.

The similarity of the two images promotes comparison, but the crucial difference created by the represented participants' facial expressions aids in supporting the linguistic representations the textual descriptions construct of both Tsarnaev and Brown. Such multimodal representations resulting from the co-presence of text and images are discussed in more detail below.

Multimodal representation

The selection of the two modes utilized in this post aids in creating representations which support one another while displaying how differently Tsarnaev and Brown have been represented in print journalism.

Text as a mode in this example provides information on the two men for the viewer, which encourages them to detect the drastic differences in media representations. The written descriptions represent difference while the images represent similarity while establishing personal closeness between the represented participants and the viewers. The images capability to attract the attention of the viewer while bringing both Tsarnaev and Brown personally close to them is more prone to evoke a reaction in the viewers. The strikingly different written descriptions, which construct linguistic representations with such tools as selection and word choices, aim to contradict previous information the viewers may have of the individuals being described. By challenging the previously crafted impressions the viewers may have had of the two young men, the potentially different representations crafted by the media become more highlighted and thus, more effective in terms of evoking emotions.

The three main functions of modes aid in examining the more specific functions text and images have in this particular example. The *ideational* function of text in this post constructs very distinct identities, as the textual descriptions represent Tsarnaev as a beautiful, normal, friendly American boy. Brown, on the other hand, is represented as a thug who is not friendly and is not engaged in any wholesome activities.

The *interpersonal* function is executed by representing the social relations between the media and young men in very different ways. On one hand, the media's relationship to a white American, even though he was involved in a terrorist act, is represented as an understanding and admiring one. On the other hand, the media's relationship to a black young man is represented as negative, even though in this example the young man is known for being a victim of police brutality. This post, on the whole, represents the way media treats different races as unjust and aims to display such juxtaposition.

Finally, the *textual* function of the post, in other words the construction of cohesion within it, is constructed by both text and images. Similarity in the positioning of elements within the post represents similarity and encourages comparison. Similar images and textual descriptions, both in terms of content and size, present the entities of describing the two young men as something comparable.

By examining the basic functions of both modes, one can detect that text and images share similar functions in the post. These functions which represent dissimilarity, for instance, portray how the functions of each mode cannot be separated. Similar representations would not arise if only one of the modes were used, which is why analyzing the multimodal representations of the post as a single entity is required. Additionally, the functions of each mode, both separately and together, cannot be divided in a straightforward manner, but one must take into account the qualities of each mode which both contribute to informing the viewers as well as evoking emotions in them.

Since the post functions as an extension of the #iftheygunnedmedown-Twitter movement, which criticized mainstream media for representing black police brutality victims negatively, a similar aim can be assumed to have directed the construction of this post as well. By displaying how the media has positively represented a white bomber while negatively representing a black victim of police brutality, the presence of a racist motivation is suggested. Since racism is not explicitly mentioned in the post, the viewer is encouraged to come to such conclusions by examining the drastically different multimodal representations of the two young men.

All in all, connecting the shooting of Michael Brown with accusations of unjust and racist media representations encourages Tumblr users to take part in an active discussion regarding the role and uses of post-modern media, as well as the presence of racism in the modern world. As a result, Tumblr users may be more prone to become more involved in discussing and sharing information about these topics. Providing opportunities for Tumblr users to detect and learn more about racism can be seen to elevate social networking sites such as Tumblr into sites of discussing social issues. Additionally, framing the shooting of Michael Brown through potentially racist media representations aids in connecting the shooting with racism in general, which can potentially promote

viewers to connect these two phenomena in general. As a result, the shooting becomes a part of the greater social issue of racism, elevating it from a single instance onto a part of a larger social issue, highlighting the shooting's significance.

In the next section, a more comprehensive outlook on various social networking sites is provided via the examination of two posts which are constructed around pre-existing material extracted from other social networking sites, such as Twitter and Facebook. The two examples below present the multifaceted multimodal representations such posts create, particularly through collaboration.

5.5 Redistributing social media content

The integration of social networking sites into the everyday lives of their users has resulted in a consistent increase in the number of new posts being produced. Since some social networking sites may contain material others do not, sharing content between sites has become a common phenomenon, also present in my data. Tumblr's interface enables the easy incorporation of pre-existing online material onto posts constructed around such redistributions. In this section two featuring redistributed material from other social networking sites will be explored, in order to study how these posts function on Tumblr and what kinds of multimodal representations are constructed.

A social networking site form which material is commonly redistributed onto Tumblr is Twitter. As Twitter is commonly perceived to contain very current and condensed information (see section 2.2), borrowing tweets to construct informative Tumblr posts where the relevant is presented in a concise form has become common. Even though the textual length of tweets is limited to 140 characters, the addition of images and videos is possible, enabling tweets to obtain a concise, multimodal form. Transferring such pre-existing posts onto Tumblr not only utilizes these compact packages of information, but it can also be done quickly, which promotes the fast distribution of current information on Tumblr as well.

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Redistributing tweets, Facebook posts or material from other sites onto Tumblr is often executed by taking a screenshot (i.e. capturing the post with one's computer by creating an image copy of the tweet), which is then posted onto Tumblr as an image. This redistribution can also be labeled entextualization, which entails the extraction of pre-existing discourse material and the insertion of that material onto a new context, enabling it to become a meaningful element within that new context (Leppänen et al. 2014: 119-120). These processes of redistribution may already provide the original post with new representations when posted onto Tumblr, but such new representations are further created due to the potential addition of more multimodal material to accompany the borrowed content.

The following example examines a Tumblr post which is constructed around a tweet onto which new, textual commentary has been added on Tumblr. Since the post is mostly constructed around text, emphasis will be placed on analyzing the linguistic representations that arise from the post.

Example 7: Turning a tweet into a collaborative Tumblr post

Example 7 below demonstrates a Tumblr post which has been constructed around a pre-existing tweet. This particular post does not discuss the shooting of Michael Brown per se, but provides information on the Ferguson protests following the shooting, during which local protestors were met by heavily armed police officers. As mentioned above, this post is a text post, i.e. a post constructed around text. Even though multimodality does not play such a key role in posts such as these, they were one of the most prominent post types in the data (16 out of 50), which warrants their analysis. In example 7 a few small images are present in the form of Twitter users' icons, but since they are users' profile images and not ones added onto the post to construct its content, they will not be analyzed. Emphasis will be placed on the entextualization of verbal text constructing the body of the post, and the arising linguistic representations.

Mike Klonsky
@mikeklonsky

Reporters say : Cops all removed their badges and id tags #Ferguson

Chicago, IL

Reply Retweet Favorite ••• More

RETWEETS	FAVORITES
486	97

9:51 PM - 13 Aug 2014

medusabitch:

> cubanazo:
>
>> This proves they intend to get away with their actions, which are definitely illegal and inhumane. Anonymity + power is a devastating combo...
>
> wait WHAT fucking hell

#this is actually and legitimately illegal #not only does this violate several amendments #but it directly infringes upon madison's statement in federalist 10 regarding safeguards against factions #not only that buy why isn't the federal government getting involved #eisenhower versus arkansas national guard anyone? #even under a president who dislike integration he still followed the law #he was fucking conservative and he signed the goddamn civil rights act #where the hell is the fucking government? these events beyond justify intervention (via queerodinson)
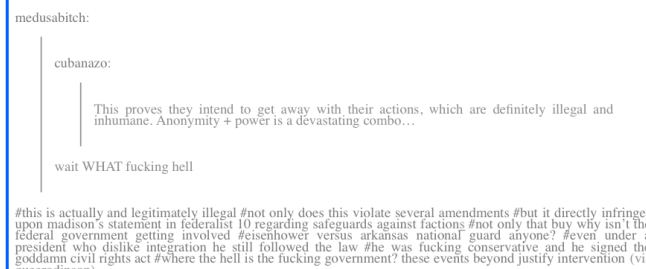
Example 7: Post containing a tweet followed by Tumblr users' written commentary (original above, below the same post with frames displaying the parts of the post and their origin)

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Linguistic representation

The post opens up with its largest and most prominent element: the screenshot of a tweet. The tweet is by Mike Klonsky, who on his own Twitter profile describes himself as "[e]ducation prof, writer, blogger, high school basketball coach". As mentioned in section 4.3, the choice of such authors to provide their name in crafting social media posts is seen as an acknowledged decision to craft social media without using an alias. Additionally, leaving his name visible in the present study is intended to enable readers to examine his tweets should the wish to do so, which promotes openly investigating the data of the present study. As a result, Klonsky's name has not been omitted from this example.

The tweet utilizes the hashtag "#Ferguson" to categorize the tweet under that particular keyword. As a result, viewers are able to quickly detect what they key topic of the tweet is, and can search for other tweets that share the same keyword. The tweet simply states:

"Reporters say: Cops all removed their badges and id tags #Ferguson"

The tweet is likely to discuss the Ferguson protests resulting from the local community's outrage towards Brown's death. The tweet was published on 13 August 2014, four days after the shooting, when protests were already active and being met by prominent police opposition. The tweet claims that during these initial protests, police officers removed the items with which they can be identified, their badges and identification tags. Since it is common in the US, even mandatory in some states, to require police officers to have either a badge number or their name visible while on duty, this alleged lack of identification in Ferguson caused alarm, even though the laws of Missouri do not require such police identification (Mathis-Lilley 2014). The tweet attracted the attention of a Tumblr user who decided to capture the tweet and post it onto Tumblr, providing the information of the tweet to a much wider audience.

The tweet, even though regarded as an image due to its structure as a visual quotation of a tweet, is constructed around text. The textual content of the tweet itself is the most salient, and thus the most prominent, element since it is placed in a central position and it is

relatively larger in comparison to the other textual elements in the Tumblr post, the end product (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 177).

The tweet is relatively short and its main body of text only spans across two lines, consisting of one sentence. The register of the tweet is official, and it can be interpreted to function as a way of distributing information. The tweet notifies others interested in following the events in Ferguson that reporters have stated that the Ferguson police officers have removed their identification. The author's own voice is not particularly prominent in the tweet and similar information could and may have been produced and shared by others as well. This information prominent approach to tweeting displays an approach to using social media, in which more focus is placed on distributing relevant, interesting information to other users rather than focusing on producing content that would involve the creator of the post personally. This challenges a more dated view of social networking sites, where they are perceived to "allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others" (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007: 1143), which places more emphasis on the individual users' personal profiles, interests and networking as the main goals of social media activity.

The screenshoted image of the tweet only constructs half of the Tumblr post. It also includes Tumblr users' comments at the bottom of the post. Determining whether any of the comments were crafted by the author of the Tumblr post cannot be done, due to the reshaping of posts that takes place as a myriad of users reblog and edit the post. As a result, a post can achieve many different forms as different versions are edited by different users, which alters and potentially hides the form the post originally took. As a result, the comments at the bottom of the post are assumed to be additions inserted after the initial creation of the post.

The comments, written by three different Tumblr users, all reflect the views of their authors and present different functions of commenting. Each comment will be examined separately to study what kinds of linguistic representations each comment produces and how the comments function in relation to the entire post.

The first comment consists of one sentence, featuring two clauses, stating:

> "This proves they intend to get away with their actions, which are definitely illegal and inhumane. Anonymity + power is a devastating combo…"

This comment does not particularly highlight the personal voice of its author. The register is relatively official and does not feature colloquialisms, slang terms or prominent indications of a dialect. It can be seen as an argumentative comment, where the author argues that the information provided by the tweet acts as evidence of the police officers in Ferguson attempting to "get away with their actions", while their actions are described as "illegal" and "inhumane", without providing any further justification for these views. On the whole, the comment's main aim seems to be to enable its author to voice his/her opinions. Those opinions are presented as true, but no further justification, for example background information, is provided to display where the truthfulness of the claim stems from.

The second comment, on the other hand, functions quite differently in comparison to the first one. The second comment merely states:

> "wait WHAT fucking hell"

The *register* of this particular comment is quite colloquial, which is displayed, for example, by orthographical features. The comment features no punctuation and utilizes capitalization in a non-standard manner. The first word of the sentence is not capitalized, but the word "WHAT" is entirely in capital letters, causing it to become the most salient element in the comment due to the word's relative size in relation to others (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 177). The syntax of the comment also features non-standard choices, as it does not contain a subject or a predicate, for example. In other words, nothing is actively done by anyone in the comment. As these two elements can be considered vital tools of making meanings within a sentence, the comment does not seem to aim to provide argumentation or additional information in terms of the event the post discusses. This second example can be seen quite clearly as functioning as a personal and emotional reaction, which does not provide additional information on the Ferguson protests or the more specific phenomenon of police officers acting as unidentified, but the author simply

comments on the post to express their shock and confusion by the information provided by the post.

The content of the comment also encourages viewing it as a spontaneous personal reaction. The lack of capitalization and punctuation can be seen to represent the lack of planning when crafting the text. The comment appears to be a snippet of the author's stream of consciousness. This is further emphasized by the *word choices* of the comment. It opens with "wait", as if the writer has become to a sudden realization upon facing the information offered by the post, which has caused them to stop in their tracks and write a hasty comment. Then, the comment continues with its most salient element, "WHAT", which further highlights the representation of the author finding the content of the post shocking (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 177). Finally, the comment closes with "fucking hell", which highlights the comment's colloquial register and, again, emphasizes the comment's representation of the author's shock, as if the author was swearing out loud out of surprise.

All these factors together formulate a comment, which does not necessarily provide factual information to other readers of the post, but certainly functions as a representation of the author's personal reaction of shock. Comments portraying the reactions of viewers can often be seen on other Tumblr posts as well, and they function as producing content with personal input and sharing one's emotions with other users who might be able to relate, which aids in creating a balance between these reactive comments and purely informative, more impersonal ones, such as the first comment of example 7.

The third and final comment presents yet another kind of function Tumblr comments can obtain, as it refers to the tags (i.e. categorization words)[7] another user has previously crafted for the post. The comment states:

> "#this is actually and legitimately illegal #not only does this violate several amendments #but it directly infringes upon madison's statement in federalist 10 regarding safeguards against factions #not only that buy why isn't the federal government getting involved #eisenhower versus arkansas national guard anyone? #even under a president

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[7] Even though tags commonly feature only one word, tags on Tumblr can contain several words or even sentences, making them longer than tags on other social networking sites.

who dislike integration he still followed the law #he was fucking conservative and he signed the goddamn civil rights act #where the hell is the fucking government? these events beyond justify intervention"

As mentioned above, this comment is entirely constructed around the tags a previous user has added onto the post when reblogging it. Even though tags are intended to provide concise keywords to Tumblr posts, they have acquired the additional function of being used for commenting. As tags are erased from a post when it is reblogged, utilizing the tag section for commenting enables the comments to be visible only once, on the commenter's own blog. If the post is then reblogged, the tags will be erased and those personal comments won't be redistributed onto other users' blogs. As a result, commenting via tags has become a more private method of adding commentary.

In this particular example, the tags crafted by one user have been found so valuable by another user that they have extracted the comments from the tag section and pasted them onto the post as a comment, making them a part of the post that further sharing will not erase. As a result, this particular comment could be seen to have two authors: one has produced the actual text (tags), while another has shared those tags by turning them into a comment, providing them with more visibility. As the two previous examples functioned as portrayals of the authors' personal opinions and reactions, this example functions as a referral to some observations another user has previously made.

The content of the comment itself is quite informative, as it features many references to previous social and political phenomena, for example, to the amendments of the American constitution ("not only does this violate several amendments"), previously made political statements ("Eisenhower versus arkansas national guard anyone?")[8] and historical events ("he signed the goddamn civil rights act"). Interpreting and understanding this particular comment requires previous information on what the text is referring to, i.e. the amendments of the US constitution, Federal 10 (an essay by James Madison arguing for the endorsement of the US constitution), the Eisenhower vs. Arkansas National Guard conflict of 1957 and the Civil Rights Act. This prerequisite of possessing previous information on these events and movements can hinder some viewers from understanding

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[8] This refers to the Arkansas National Guard preventing African American students from entering a racially segregated school in 1957, the stopping of which required an intervention from president Eisenhower.

the representations that are constructed by the comment, particularly in relation to the historical relationship between the police and ordinary citizens.

The orthographical construction of the comment features no capitalization or punctuation, since the comment consists of tags in which capitalization and punctuation are not commonly used. Additionally, each sentence begins with the number sign, signifying that the following sentence is a hashtag, a categorization word (or in this case, phrase). Even though the word choices in the comment feature words one can associate with an official register (e.g. "safeguards against factions" and "justify intervention"), the comment encompasses a personal voice from the author, adding more colloquial elements onto the comment. This is achieved, for example, by the presence of curse words, such as "goddamn" and "fucking". As a result, the information presented in a mostly official register is also presented by representing the author's personal feelings and shock, making the comment more personal and potentially emotion-evoking.

Due to its content, the comment can be seen to function as a manifestation of the author's opinions in a more colloquial manner, while simultaneously providing information that is official, which is represented by naming events and people involved in exemplifying the arguments the author is making. On the whole, this third comment presents a combination of informational and personal comments, where the author's voice and personal, heated emotions are detectable through word choices and register, but where the focus is also on the information value of the content, functioning to provide information to others.

Functions of text as a mode

Even though the example above is constructed around text, preventing the creation of multimodal representations, the three main functions of modes can be utilized to elaborate on the functions text carries in this example.

On the *ideational* level text functions most prominently in this post by denoting specific identities to the Ferguson police. Text both in the tweet and in the comments construct an identity for the police where they are represented as untrustworthy and even criminal, for

example through word choices ("illegal", "inhumane") and by the information that has been selected to construct the post. As a result, the texts create a worldview where the police cannot be trusted.

The *interpersonal* function of text in this post aids in creating representations of social relations, particularly between the police and the ordinary citizens. Even though the post does not explicitly refer to the people who have to face the police, the text suggests that the relationship between the people and the police is strained due to the way the police are engaging in illegal and even inhumane activity. Additionally, the post constructs social relations by providing several comments of Tumblr users who linguistically represent their disappointment and distrust in the police. As a result, such linguistic representations function interpersonally in creating tension between the ordinary people, so to say, and the police.

Finally, the *textual*, i.e. the cohesive, function is fulfilled by text in this post by creating a unified post solely around text. The post follows a chronological from top to bottom-order of presenting information, arguments and reactions that are all referring to the information the post initially presents. As a result, text is utilized successfully in creating a cohesive post even though it is the collaborative creation of several authors.

All in all, this post utilizes text in very different ways. It displays personal reactions and emotions, provides new information or even mixes these two to suit the communicative needs of a particular author. By constructing linguistic representations, for example with register, word choices and sentence structure, the authors are able to represent their own opinions in relation to the Ferguson protests, creating a lively discussion on the topic. By linguistically representing the protests the post be seen to invite more people to become involved, even though they are not physically present to protest. Sharing information on the progression of the protests, as well as enabling Tumblr users to share their shocked reactions and argumentative comments increases their sense of involvement, which provides an influential purpose for posts such as this.

On a broader scale, the post also represents the status social networking sites carry as means for distributing information. In this example, the tweet even refers to reporters

("Reporters say"), but still the post itself has been regarded as a faster, more reliable way of sharing this information than a news report which may be produced later at a slower pace. Representing the role of Twitter and Tumblr as fast-paced distribution channels for new information highlights the general shift of sharing the news in today's world.

Michael Brown's shooting is represented in this post by connecting it to much broader social phenomena. First, the post most prominently discusses the protests as the tweet provides up-to-date information acquired from amongst the protests. Additionally, the comments at the bottom of the post tie it to a much broader social context, which refers to the American constitution, historical events and aspects of the American justice system in creating discussions on the relationship between the state and its citizens. By framing the post as a part of a discussion on civil rights and the status of the American police force, the shooting of Michael Brown acquires a much prominent role as a significant part of Americans' lives.

The post also displays the way collaborative posts with redistributed material enable several users to join together in constructing a post that discusses a phenomenon or an event, such as the Ferguson protests, from various angles: reactive, emotional and informational. Such posts utilize the various input provided by different social networking sites and various users in constructing a single post which employs the input of several people.

As the role of the author on Tumblr can range from someone who authors an original comment to those who redistribute others' previously written arguments to make them more known, the multifaceted functions and representations present in the comments of this post display how users can position themselves into the larger group of Tumblr users. This post also provides insights into the way various social networking sites are interconnected and material crafted on one site can be transferred onto other sites, where it can act as the stem for developing more multifaceted collaborative posts.

Example 8: Tumblr post containing a tweet and a Facebook post

A second example featuring entextualization can be found in my data, which features material from two social networking sites: Twitter and Facebook. Similarly to example 7, example 8 also discusses the Ferguson protests following Brown's death. Additionally, example 8 also features content that is heavily centered around one specific individual, Catherine Nardi, the wife of the police chief in Ferguson. Due to the public status of the Facebook post the Tumblr post is constructed around, as well as the fact that Nardi's status as the police chief's wife is also explicitly stated in the post, concealing her name and identity was not seen as necessary. Again, the opportunity to identify her and even examine other posts she has made on social networking sites invites readers to find out more on her opinions and personally made statements, which in turn supports the creation of a more well-rounded perspective on the person behind the single post that is presented in example 8.

Examining the multimodal representations in example 8 below provides more information on collaborative posts, their functions and the overall effects on the way the shooting of Michael Brown, and particularly the protests that followed the shooting, are represented on Tumblr.
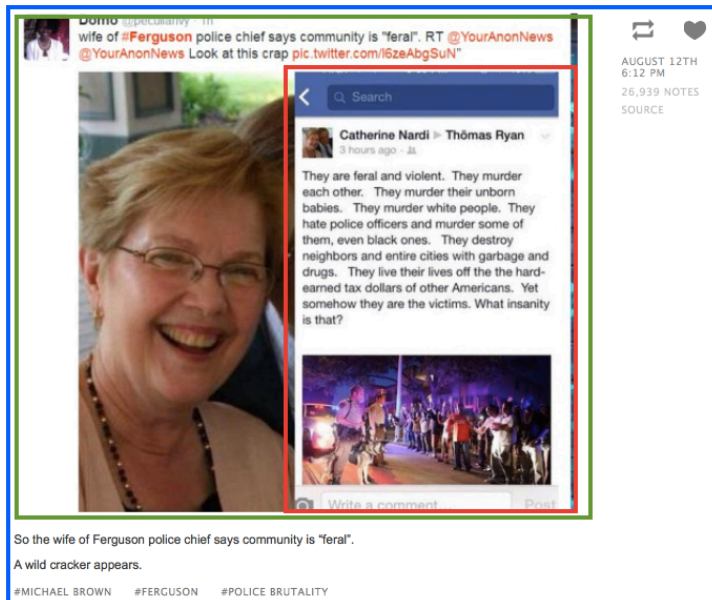
Example 8: Tumblr post containing a redistributed Facebook post and a tweet (original above, below the post includes frames displaying the material extracted from each social networking site)

As mentioned above, this post features material from two other social networking sites in addition to Tumblr, resulting from several instances of redistribution. The main content of the post is built around a Facebook post made by Catherine Nardi, the wife of the police

chief in Ferguson, an individual in the middle of witnessing the Ferguson protests. In this personally constructed (but publicly published) Facebook post, Nardi discusses and describes the protestors in Ferguson by utilizing words such as "feral" and "violent". The Facebook post attracted attention and was added onto Twitter by adding a screenshot of the Facbeook post alongside Nardi's profile picture to accompany a tweet, which got redistributed to several users' Twitter profiles.

The tweet in its entirety reads:

> wife of #Ferguson police chief says community is "feral". RT @YourAnonNews @YourAnonNews Look at this crap pic.twitter.com/l6zeAbgSuN

The tweet features many of Twitter's functions, which are commonly used to involve other Twitter users to contribute to the content of the tweet. First, the tweet utilizes hashtags and labels the term "#Ferguson" as its only categorization word, highlighting its importance. Second, the textual part of the tweet features the original text the tweet consisted of, as well as additional textual commentary added by another user during the retweeting, i.e. redistributing process. The original textual portion of the tweet is preceded by the letters "RT" (i.e. retweet), which is, in turn, preceded by the redistributor's textual commentary.

Third, the tweet utilizes the @-function, which enables users to direct their tweets specifically to another Twitter user by adding their username with the @-sign in their tweet. In this example, the original tweet was directed at @YourAnonNews (which has been mistakenly added twice to the tweet) in an attempt to inform them about the content of Nardi's Facebook post.

As mentioned above, the original tweet was redistributed by another Twitter user, who added "wife of #Ferguson police chief says community is "feral"." to the original tweet, potentially to describe the content of the original tweet more specifically to his/her Twitter followers. Finally, the collaborative tweet, which refers to a pre-existing Facebook post, has been captured as an image by screenshotting it, which was then posted onto Tumblr with the following additional comments, which can be found at the bottom of the post:

> So the wife of Ferguson police chief says community is "feral".
> A wild cracker appears.

This multifaceted process of crafting a Tumblr post which features content from two other social networking sites displays how many various authors can provide their input into formulating a final product in the form of a Tumblr post. Various social networking sites possess several functions, e.g. Facebook highlights the personal life events and opinions of individual users, while Twitter highlights the quick distribution of concisely formulated current information. As a result, the content found on these sites varies and promotes the sharing of materials from one site to the next, which may lack such information.

To examine how the functions of the various social networking sites influence the posts that construct the Tumblr post presented in example 8, the functions of each separate post of the collaborative entity is examined next. This provides a foundation for examining the multimodal representations that arise from the Tumblr post as a result of the interaction of several modes and several posts within one collaborative post.

Functions of each post

First, the functions of the Facebook post are worth exploring, especially due to its central nature in providing informational content for the entire Tumblr post. The Facebook post features Nardi's commentary on the Ferguson protests as well as an image depicting protestors, and originates from Nardi's personal profile. As a result, the post can be interpreted to function as a display of Nardi's personal opinions directed towards her personal social network of friends and acquaintances.

Originally, the post was directed at another Facebook user, Thomas Ryan, which is displayed at the top of the Facebook post by the arrow connecting Nardi and Ryan's names, signaling interaction. As a result, the post is intended to function as a provider of information to an acquaintance, even though it contains information others will see as

noteworthy. This post can be seen to function both on a private (through dialogue) and public (the public's access to the post[9]) level, aiming to function on an informational level.

The tweet has its own functions, which add to the representations created by the entire post. As mentioned above, the tweet utilizes the @-sign in directing the tweet to a specific user, in this case the user "YourAnonNews". Similarly to the Facebook post, this creates a sense of dialogue between two users, even though the post's publication forum, a social networking site, already implies that they are not aimed to solely function as private dialogue. As tweets are public by default, the tweet cannot be seen to only retain the function of maintaining dialogue. The tweet can also be seen to function in an informative manner, as information is offered both to Twitter user YourAnonNews, as well as others who may encounter the public tweet. As a result, the collaboration in constructing the tweet provides it with a higher informational value, as more relevant information is provided by various users.

The functions of both the tweet and the Facebook post provide a foundation for examining how multiple modes function in this multimodal Tumblr post. Next, the two modes present in the post, text and images, are examined to provide further information on the way multimodal representations are constructed.

Visual representation

The post as a whole contains three separate images: one features protestors facing police officers as a part of the Facebook post, the second is the profile photo of Catherine Nardi beside the Facebook post, and third, the post also features two small user icons. One is at the top left hand corner, depicting the profile image of the redistributed tweet's author. Another small image can be found at the top left corner of the Facebook post, which contains a smaller version of Nardi's profile picture, which can be found in a much larger scale at the center of the post. Since the two small images function as icons for visiting the

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[9] The Facebook post's public status during its redistribution to Twitter cannot be confirmed, since the post cannot be found publicly anymore, possibly due to the negative attention it gained on other social networking sites. However, since the post was shared on Twitter by someone who can be assumed not to be a Facebook friend of Nardi's, one may assume that it was originally publicly accessible, or, at least, screenshoted and shared to the wider online public at some stage.

posts' authors' profiles and are not a part of the post's content crafted by any of the several authors, they will not be analyzed. Nardi's profile image in its larger form at the center of the post is a part of the posts content, which is why it will be analyzed in more detail below.

In terms of image salience, the image depicting the protestors and police officers in Ferguson does not attract the most attention when compared to the other images in the post, based on several visual cues. Factors such as relative size, placement in relation to other elements and the size of elements within the image make it less visually prominent than the profile photo of Nardi. The image of the protestors is proportionally smaller than her photo, and its frame size as well as the size of the image itself prevent the detection of protestors' faces, which would increase the image's salience. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 202)

On the other hand, the profile photo of Nardi utilizes similar salience increasing elements in becoming the most visually prominent image in the post. As mentioned above, the salience of the image is highlighted due to its relatively large size. Additionally, the image is placed at the left side of the post, which is often the side onto which previously known elements are placed, whereas the right side often contains images providing information that is new or even problematic (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 181). Through placement, Nardi's profile photo represents something the viewer is intended to view as common, an image of a smiling white woman. In comparison, the placement of the photo from the protests on the right is represented as providing new information and something problematic, an image depicting conflict.

Several factors about Nardi's profile photo increase its prominence as a visual element. Presenting a human face in such a large proportional scale increases the psychological salience of the image, attracting attention to it. The facial expression of Nardi in the image also conveys happiness, friendliness and approachability while she makes eye contact with the viewer. This constructs a demand, which results in the construction of a more personal relationship between the represented participant (in this case Nardi) and the viewer. The demand quite literally demands the viewer to relate to the person making eye

contact with them and encourages the viewer to emotionally engage with the participant. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 63, 138)

Linguistic representation

The linguistic representations of this multifaceted post are also created through many meaning making practices, for example *placement*. The paragraph containing the Facebook post on the right, and the tweet at the top, are placed in a way that situates them in a hierarchical order. The tweet at the top attracts initial attention as in the Western world reading is most often begun at the top of a page. Additionally, at times the elements which are placed on top represent the general core of the information, whereas the elements at the bottom (in this case, Nardi's photo, the entire Facebook post, as well as the comments at the very end of the Tumblr post) depict more specific information and evidence supporting the general information presented at the top. This approach can be applied to this example where the tweet at the top presents a general idea of what the topic of the post is, which is then elaborated on below the tweet. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 186-187)

The least prominent textual elements of the post are the written comment and tags at the bottom of the post, which were added onto the collaborative post on Tumblr. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (ibid.), the placement of these textual elements implies that they are new, providing even more specific information on what has been presented above. From a technical standpoint, the placement of these elements stems from the way new or additional items are automatically placed when constructing posts on each respective social networking site, but it simultaneously aids in separating the different elements from each other, as content from each social networking site has its own frame, which differ in size and placement. The physical space between the comments and tags at the bottom of the Tumblr post aids viewers to detect them as something that was added later, as separate.

As mentioned above, the tweet at the top of the post contains the input of two authors: the original tweet (the text following "RT") was written by one author, while further written

commentary was added at the beginning of the tweet by the person who retweeted the original. As the length of tweets is limited to 140 characters, and this particular instance features usernames and a link, the length of the rest of the text is very limited, hindering the creation of broad linguistic representations. Even though the tweet only contains a small amount of textual material, some observations can be made on its emerging linguistic representations.

The *register* of the tweet is quite colloquial. The original tweet's main body of text states: "Look at this crap", which constructs a full sentence, encouraging the recipient of the tweet to examine the material presented behind the provided link, i.e. the two images presented below the tweet. The beginning of the sentence is capitalized, nothing is misspelled and the sentence is concise, which suggests that the register of the tweet would be official. However, the use of the word "crap" shift's the sentence's register towards colloquial. As a result, even though the short sentence follows the conventions of official writing, the use of the word "crap" displays emotion and shifts the tweet to function as a personal, colloquial, surprised reaction towards the material the link contains. The comment can also suggest to viewers that shock is an appropriate reaction to the link's contents.

The beginning of the tweet also constructs linguistic representations, this time by the original tweet's redistributor. This part of the tweet portrays a relatively official register, causing the tweet in its entirety to feature both official and colloquial registers, which can highlight the different parts of the tweets as the creations of different authors. The beginning of the tweet consists of one full sentence, stating: "wife of #Ferguson police chief says community is "feral". The word choices of the tweet are official and do not highlight the personal voice of the author. The lack of capitalization makes the register of the tweet seem more colloquial, and additionally causes it to seem more spontaneously and possibly quickly crafted. The official register is further emphasized by the way the author quotes a word from the Facebook post made by Nardi ("feral"), which displays the conventions of official writing or even reporting, where quotations are to be indicated as such.

Text is also present in the Facebook post crafted by Nardi, which appears at the center of the entire post, preceding the image depicting protesters. In the text, Nardi presents her personal views on the Ferguson protesters' behavior. The paragraph states:

> They are feral and violent. They murder each other. They murder their unborn babies. They murder white people. They hate police officers and murder some of them, even black ones. They destroy neighbors and entire cities with garbage and drugs. They live their lives of the hard-earned tax dollars of other Americans. Yet somehow they are the victims. What insanity is that?

This paragraph most prominently utilizes *word choices* in creating linguistic representations of the Ferguson protesters. For example, the word "feral" is used, which is often connected to wild, uncontrollable animals. Utilizing this word in connection to the Ferguson protesters creates a dehumanizing representation, where they are represented as non-human, animalistic and out of control, which creates distance between protestors and the author. This act of distancing by implementing various word choices is further emphasized by the repeated use of the word "they". Most of the sentences (all but the two final ones) begin with the word "they", which is used in each sentence to list all the negative activities the protestors are engaging in. By calling the protestors "they", the author distances herself from them, while representing fundamental differences between her and the protesters. Since the group Nardi refers to as "they" is not explicitly named, the image below the description provides that information to the viewers. As the image displays white police officers encountering black protestors, a connection can be made establishing that "they" is in fact indexing the protestors, who are predominantly black.

Nardi also uses vocabulary that can be seen to carry very negative connotations. Words such as "murder" (which is used multiple times), "violent", "garbage" and "drugs" evoke connotations of phenomena which are seen as negative, resulting in connecting those negative aspects to "them", the protestors. As a result, this faceless mob of others labeled "they" becomes further represented in connection to negative things, creating an overall negative representation.

Repetition is another representational tool implemented in Nardi's text. Repetition can, according to Johnstone (1987: 208), "create rhetorical *presence*", providing "linguistic foregrounding of an idea which can serve to make it persuasive even without logical

support". In other words, the use of repetition within a text increases its ability to persuade the reader, which can potentially overpower logic in convincing them to believe what they are being told. As mentioned above, repeating the term "they" enables the systematic distancing of the protestors from the author. Additionally, the repetition of words such as "murder" increases the presence of negative words within the text, causing the protestors to be frequently associated with these negative things within the text. All in all, repetition in this post potentially aims to persuade the reader to agree with the author, even though her statements on the actions of the protesters (e.g. murdering) may be more based on impressions and opinions than actual actions done by the protesters.

Even though repetition and negative vocabulary are utilized throughout most of the text, the paragraph ends with two sentences that differ from the beginning of the text. The first sentence, "Yet somehow they are the victims", presents a word, "victims", which conflicts with the negative words that the author utilized previously to describe the protesters. This connotation of viewing the protesters as victims is represented as illogical, which is indexed by the word "yet". This representation is supported by the use of the word "somehow", which represents the author's view that the method through which the protestors could be viewed as victims is incomprehensible and irrational. A similar representation of irrationality is constructed by the last sentence of the paragraph, "What insanity is that?". Again, the sentence refers to illogically viewing the protestors as victims, while simultaneously the focus is shifted onto the reader. By asking a rhetorical question, Nardi involves the reader at the end of the text, including them in the discussion. After depicting the protestors as the feral Other, and representing the idea of viewing them as victims as "insane", the reader is directed to agree with the author, as disagreeing with her would imply irrationality.

Finally, the text at the bottom of the post, which features a comment and tags added onto the post when it was posted on Tumblr, provides further linguistic representations. The comment and tags are:

> So the wife of Ferguson police chief says community is "feral".
> A wild cracker appears.
>
> #MICHAEL BROWN   #FERGUSON   #POLICE BRUTALITY

In terms of information, the comment and the beginning of the tweet at the top of the post provide very similar contextualizing information as the comment at the bottom does. Both refer to Nardi and her status as the wife of Ferguson's police chief, who is reported as calling the Ferguson protesters "feral". However, the comment, despite its similar content to the tweet, contains a different function of being a personal, sarcastic comment. This is caused by the use of the word "so", which the comment opens with. By making such a word choice, the author of the comment displays that the information that is to follow in the comment is to be viewed in a sarcastic manner as false and potentially even ridiculous.

The second row of the comment, however, takes a more personal tone as the comment is provided with a humorous insult aimed at Nardi. The sentence "A wild cracker appears", alludes to two cultural phenomena. First, the expression "a wild X appears" refers to Pokémon videogames, in which the same phrase is utilized when the player encounters a new Pokémon unexpectedly. The term "cracker", on the other hand, is used to refer to white people. Urban Dictionary defines "cracker" as

> Slang word used to refer to those of European ancestry. The word is thought to have either derived from the sound of a whip being cracked by slave owners, or because crackers are generally white in color.

As a result, this part of the comment can be interpreted to describe the sudden appearance of a white lady, which aids in creating a representation of Nardi as separate from the black protestors she is critiquing, and as someone who appears out of thin air, as if their opinions and the choice to voice them were hastily made. By commenting at the end of the Tumblr post, the author is provided with the opportunity to use their comment not only as a way to inform, but also to provide a sarcastic, personal remark which highlights the author's own voice, making them a more central part of this collaborative post, while providing the reader with a suggested position, i.e. viewing Nardi's commentary as something not worth believing.

Multimodal representation

The use of two modes, images and text, in this extremely collaborative post construct multifaceted linguistic and visual representations. The more specific functions of both modes can be explored with the aid of the three major functions of modes.

First, the *ideational* function of text and images aid in denoting particular identities to several individuals and groups. Nardi linguistically represents the protesters as the Other, also potentially denoting a similar identity to black people by alluding to their animalistic qualities. Additionally, text functions in creating representations in the comments at the bottom of the post which label Nardi as an ironically traditional white woman whose hastily made opinions the reader is not encouraged to believe, but to find ridiculous. Images, on the other hand, functions ideationally by placing the police and the protesters opposite one another. This represents the conflict between the two groups, even suggesting that the conflict also concerns whites and blacks, as all protesters in the image are black while both police officers are white.

Second, the *interpersonal* function of text constructs social relations most prominently by Nardi's linguistic representations othering the protesters from her. Word choices, in particular, represent the protesters in a dehumanizing manner, resulting in a great social gap between them and Nardi. Images, on the other hand, fulfill the interpersonal function in similar ways as they executed the ideational one. The protesters and the police are represented as opposite and in conflict. Additionally, Nardi's large profile picture in the middle of the post establishes a social relationship between her and the viewer, for example due to demands and the image's high salience.

Finally, the *textual* function is fulfilled by text by creating a cohesive textual entity within the post. This is achieved, for example, by the repetition in Nardi's Facebook post, which highlights the text as a unified entity. Similarly, the repetition of key information and keywords, e.g. "Ferguson", "protesters" and "says community is 'feral'", all aid in constructing a cohesive text. Despite the division of the text into several parts, the similarity in content aids in viewing it as an entity.

On the whole, the post represents the shooting of Michael Brown by framing social topics such as racism and police brutality through the tension and conflict between the protesters and the police. By representing Nardi, a person prominently linked to the Ferguson police due to her husband's status, as someone who others herself from the protesters, the division between them is emphasized. This division can also be suggested to entail the black and the white, which is constructed, for example, visually by depicting protesters as black and the police as white. As a result, police brutality and racism are represented as parallel phenomena, where the protesters are represented as those opposing police brutality, where the police are represented as its proprietor. Framing the shooting of Michael Brown in such complex and multimodal ways links both social phenomena to the shooting, causing it to attract more attention by becoming a social cause instead of an isolated incident.

This example epitomizes collaborative Tumblr posts well, as it contains the input of several authors and material from several social networking sites, displaying the expertise authors of such posts are required to possess. The text and images construct various representations, which support one another in creating one, cohesive post discussing the two opposite sides engaged in the Ferguson protests. Even though some rudimentary observations can be made on the functions of text and images in this particular post, the overlapping nature of those functions must be highlighted. Those functions cannot be separated from one another since both modes support the meanings constructed by the other, causing them to function in an intertwined fashion. The representations of otherness and even implied representations of race display the discussions posts such as this construct. By combining topics such as race and the Ferguson protests, the entire discussion regarding the shooting of Michael Brown acquires a deeper tone, through which discussions on the shooting may provide Tumblr users with the opportunity to discuss race.

All in all, this example provides a glimpse into the complex social relations that Tumblr posts can portray. The collaborative post not only displays the way several Tumblr users can add their input onto a post, but also exemplifies the way various social networking sites can collaborate in sharing material resulting in the construction of a multifaceted Tumblr post. The presence of several authors enables the presence of differing opinions,

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and can even create conflict within the post due to contesting repersentations, e.g. on race. By framing the shooting of Michael Brown through the othering executed by Nardi, the racial aspect of the broader social topics of racism and police brutality become highlighted. This aids in linking Brown's death to become a part of a larger, social issue. This social impact evoked by the shooting aids in involving Tumblr users to take part in such social discussions.

The next section features the concluding discussion of the present study. It features a summarization on the main results of the present study in relation to both the research questions as well as previous research, discussion on the implications and applications the present study provides, evaluation and finally, suggestions for future research which could continue the examination of similar themes and topics that were discussed in my analysis.

6 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In the present study I examined the multimodal representations of the Michael Brown shooting on Tumblr. My main aim was to

> **explore the way Tumblr produces multimodal, collaborative posts discussing the shooting of Michael Brown, and to examine the representations those multimodal posts produce**.

This main aim was further divided into two other aims. The second aim of my thesis was *to examine how topics such as current events or cultural, social and political issues (e.g. police brutality and racism) are represented on Tumblr*. In particular, I aimed to examine the way these issues are discussed, reacted and commented on. Finally, my third aim was to *display the connections between multimodality and various social networking sites*, which has not been extensively researched before. With the aid of these aims, specific research questions were formulated to provide concrete goals for the present study.

My main research question was

> **how is the shooting of Michael Brown multimodally represented on Tumblr?**

A more focused approach to answering my main question was aided by formulating two additional sub-questions, which were

> **what kinds of multimodal meanings are created on the shooting of Michael Brown**, and
> **what kinds of functions do the different modes have separately and together?**

Both the aims and research questions attempted to produce new information on Tumblr and the way its users adopt multimodality as a valuable meaning-making tool. Focus was also placed on examining how these multimodal representations aid in creating meanings relating to Michael Brown, his shooting and the following protests, which provided

insight into how racism and police brutality were also represented in the data in a multimodal manner.

6.1. Findings in relation to the research questions

Drawing on insights from media discourse analysis, computer mediated discourse analysis and multimodal analysis enabled me to formulate two frameworks acting as the foundation for my analysis. A framework for analyzing the linguistic representations in the data was created by utilizing a proposed list of the most important meaning-making tools in media writing (Carvalho 2008). The second framework created for analyzing the visual representations in the data was adapted from the grammar of visual design (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006), which focuses on the way meanings are crafted visually. The frameworks were applied to analyzing the data, which consisted of 50 Tumblr posts, all of which discussed the shooting of Michael Brown or the ensuing protests. Additional emphasis was placed on analyzing how the simultaneous use of several modes created further representations.

As regards the results of the analysis, some variation existed in the frequency of using different modes in my data. Text and images were the most used modes, but others, such as moving images, were also utilized. Below, the most common functions of text and images in the data are presented, which aids in answering my two additional research questions, regarding the **functions** and **meanings** constructed by using multiple modes.

In the data, text commonly functioned as a tool for *providing contextual information* constructed in an official register, or as a tool enabling users to *express their emotions, reactions or opinions* colloquially. Text was also the mode with which *comments* were produced, making it the mode most frequently involved in producing collaborative posts featuring the input of several Tumblr users expanding on posts by adding new information onto them.

In the texts, linguistic representations of Michael Brown, his shooting or the subsequent protests were commonly created through *choice of register* and *word choices*. By choosing an official or a colloquial register, authors could create representations that would either highlight the information in the text, or represent the text personally and emotionally. On the other hand, word choices permitted authors to create representations arising from the connotations certain words carry. For example, word choices could label participants negative, positive, inferior, superior, normal or abnormal, for example.

Images functioned as *contextualizing* and *attention grabbing* elements in the data. Images possess several qualities with which the viewer is positioned as personally close, distant, similar or different in comparison to the represented participants. For example, in images the presence of *offers* and *demands* and the selection of *content, frame sizes* and *angles* all positioned the viewer and the represented participants in a hierarchical order or personal distance from each other, which was explored in examples 2 and 3. Both examples compared carefully selected similar images from the civil rights movement and the Ferguson protests, creating visual representations distancing the viewer from the depicted represented participants, while highlighting the repetitive nature of both events and the underlying causes, such as racism, in influencing the lack of such historical progress. Images in these examples functioned as tools for evoking emotions in the viewer while being reminded of historical events, encouraging the viewer to contemplate on the status of racism in America during the past 50 years.

As mentioned above, images in my data often functioned by *evoking emotions*. Images depicting human figures and faces (increasing psychological salience) often aided in encouraging viewers to pay attention to images from a personal and emotional perspective. Again, the selection of *angles*, *frame sizes*, *facial expressions, offers* and *demands* all aided in creating a personal relationship between viewer and represented participants. In example 4, the use of a family picture of Brown which portrays him smiling alongside his siblings while facing the viewer, utilized the above-mentioned tools in representing him as a boy with a family, juxtaposing his smile with the textual representation of his death, encouraging the viewer to relate personally and emotionally to the death of the humanized person being represented.

The data also featured moving images, which were most prominently used through reaction GIFs. These moving, silent (i.e. no aural mode) video extracts functioned as visual quotations representing the author's emotions or reactions, replacing their textual manifestation. The use of reaction GIFs presented another multimodal element in my data, resulting in the creation of multimodal narratives, where for example the representations created by a text could be elaborated on by the addition of such moving images.

The use of images and reaction GIFs in the data supported the previously crafted notion of the "visual turn" (Kress 1998: 58), which highlights the growing importance of images in our communication, resulting in the replacement of text with images. This was detected, for example, in the use of reaction GIFs which replaced verbal text in Tumblr users' posts in describing their feelings or reactions. Similarly, the frequent use of images (34 out of 50 posts contained images or moving images) highlights the presence of such a turn. In an attempt to provide concise and accurate information, Tumblr users often utilized images in constructing their posts, which provided those posts with ample opportunities to grab the viewers' attention and to evoke emotions in them.

Each mode formed its own representations, but the coexistence of several modes resulted in the creation of further multimodal representations. Such meanings were presented in example 4, through the discrepancy between the happy family photo of Michael Brown and a written caption below it, stating his death. The conflicting emotional meanings crafted by text and images created further representations together, resulting in uneasiness in the viewer, as emotions of grief and loss were present in overall representations. The use of multiple modes enabled each mode to support each other's representations, or present conflicting ones, resulting in the powerful juxtaposition of various viewpoints from which the shooting of Brown was observed.

All in all, multimodality in the data was displayed in posts by the presence of several functions: the posts could inform, educate, and provide users with the chance to voice their opinions or encounter emotions. The functions of several modes were often overlapping and influenced the overall representations arising from the use of multiple modes. Even though rudimentary divisions were made to explore the functions of each mode, their intertwined nature, which affected the overall construction of multimodal

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representations, revealed that the functions of modes cannot be separated and divided in a clear manner.

The analysis also explored the *collaborative* aspect of multimodal Tumblr posts. Posts could be edited and elaborated on as several users could add their own input onto pre-existing posts through commenting textually or visually. User collaboration between Tumblr and other social networking sites was also present in the data. In examples 7 and 8, Tumblr posts were constructed around pre-existing posts from Twitter and Facebook. These examples portrayed the interconnectedness of social networking sites, as well as the multimodal representations several authors contributing on one post can create, ranging from sarcasm and personal, emotional opinions to information distribution, all of which affected the overall representations created by such posts.

Multifaceted observations were made to answer my main research question, **how is the shooting of Michael Brown multimodally represented on Tumblr**. All in all, the shooting of Michael Brown was represented through the frequent use of text, images and moving images. All of these modes possessed capabilities to create representations highlighting particular aspects of Brown's shooting. Text, for example, often provided information representing Brown's shooting as an act of racism, a murder or as another incident on a timeline featuring several acts of police brutality. Images represented Brown's death, for example through the loss of his family or in relation to persistent racial struggle promoted by the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Moving images represented Brown's death by displaying, for example, the delighted reactions of Tumblr users to the misfortunes of Officer Wilson (see example 1) or disbelief towards posts arguing that Brown had been the attacker, not the victim (see example 4) in the altercation that resulted in his death. Overall, Brown's shooting and the ensuing protests were multimodally represented from the viewpoint of broader groups of people, e.g. the Brown family, all protesters or all black Americans. These representations highlighted the broader societal impact the shooting had in terms of the struggle against racism and police brutality black Americans face today.

The data also created multimodal representations on larger, societal issues such as racism and police brutality, which were represented, for example, by framing the protesters as a

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unified group facing an opposite group consisting of the police (see examples 2, 3 and 8). The protests were also framed to highlight their resemblance with the civil rights movement, which resulted in the representation that racism and police brutality have been American issues in the past and remain as such today. The underlying opposition of black vs. white could also be detected, e.g. in examples 2 and 8, where the visual placement of black and white people opposite one another while being divided by an empty space further distancing them from one another highlighted the representations of the two races as fundamentally separate, even oppositional. On the whole, racism was not explicitly discussed in length in any of the posts, but it was alluded to with multimodal means by constructing representations of opposition and otherness, which signifies the topic's relevance in today's discussions, not just on Tumblr but on a broader social level as well.

6.2 Findings in relation to previous research

As mentioned in section 2.2, previous research on Tumblr has emphasized the role of the site's internal communities and groups, by examining topics such as *fandoms* (fan communities) and their culture (Hillman, Procyk and Neustaedter 2014). Previous research on online representations has been done, for example, involving the examination of self-representations online (Fink and Miller 2014). However, research concerning representations and social networking sites, Tumblr included, often focuses on representing individual or group identities, which has left the examination of overall representations arising from posts overlooked. Multimodality in relation to Tumblr has only been exclusively researched by Bourlai and Herring (2014), who focused on examining how multiple modes (i.e. text, images, moving images) convey sentiment on the site. Solely focusing on multimodally conveying sentiment produces new, valuable information on multimodality on Tumblr, but does overlook examining broader multimodal representations, which can range beyond displaying emotion.

The shooting of Michael Brown has also been researched to a small extent, e.g. in relation to the public's response to the shooting (Kochel 2014), but the incident's recent occurrence has prevented the creation of ample research at the time of writing.

The results of previous research have provided insights on Tumblr, online representations and the Michael Brown shooting, which support the results of the present study. For example the posts crafted by fandoms have been found to recycle the "fictions and personalities" the community shares an interest in, adding their voices to posts, which correlates well with the results of the present study in which redistribution of pre-existing multimodal material occurred as a way of various users taking part in posts that interested them (Hillman, Procyk and Neustaedter 2014: 8). This collective aspect of using Tumblr was also detected within trans communities on Tumblr (Fink and Miller 2014: 624), while the trans community was also found to display the embodied representations of their sexuality on Tumblr. Both pieces of research support the results of the present study, which highlighted the active construction of representations through posts, which enabled and encouraged their collective creation, enabling various users to make their views heard.

Bourlai and Herring's (2014) results on examining the multimodal displays of sentiment on Tumblr provide some confirmation to the results of the present study, as they found that images were more apt to conveying images than plain text and that analyzing such data multimodally yields more accurate results in sentiment analysis. In the present study, similar observations on images and moving images and their capabilities to evoke and convey emotion were made.

Research on the shooting of Michael Brown (Kochel 2014; 2015) explored the way the Ferguson community viewed the police following Brown's death. Mistrust and negative feelings were extracted from interviews, both towards the Ferguson police and violent protestors. These negative views were also reflected in the results of the present study, for example through the creation of negative representations of the Ferguson police, as they were compared to the police officers opposing the civil rights movement during the 60s (see examples 2 and 3). Similar negative feelings towards the protesters were extracted in example 8.

All in all, the recent increase in Tumblr's popularity has not yet been followed by extensive research, although some exists. In the future Tumblr will most likely be extensively researched, resulting from the increase in the site's popularity and its role as a

site within which information and meanings are produced and shared. At this moment, however, the lack of research on Tumblr focusing on posts, not individual users, fandoms and communities, does not provide further opportunities to compare the results of the present study to previous research. The lack of research on multimodal representation on Tumblr is prominent in particular, resulting in the need to conduct further research to better enable comparisons.

6.3 Implications and applications

Since Tumblr has not yet been researched extensively, the findings of the present study can provide insights to the academic community by providing new information on topics such as representations online, Tumblr's use and functions and multimodality on social networking sites. The findings can also be utilized outside academia, e.g. by users of social networking sites, who can gain insights on how to both construct and decode meanings on social networking sites.

For academic audiences the findings of the present study provide new information, particularly for computer mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) and multimodal analysis. Since the present study adopted methods from both fields to examine an online environment in which multimodality is utilized, both fields can gain fresh perspectives on expanding their potential research topics to sites such as Tumblr where computer-mediated discourse meets multimodality. Since the findings of the present study highlight the multifaceted opportunities of constructing meanings even in a collaborative manner both on Tumblr and other social networking sites via post redistribution, these observations could broaden the view these fields have on social networking sites. By viewing them not only as sites for formulating personal networks, but also as online environments in which information, reactions and user-made constructions of representations are created, social networking sites could be examined in a broader and more comprehensive manner.

Social media users could benefit from the findings of the present study by learning more on the construction of posts on social networking sites, and the kinds of effects multiple modes have on the way viewers interpret posts. By gaining such awareness, the users of social networking sites could learn to utilize multimodality in constructing future posts which correspond with the author's intentions. Additionally, interpreting posts would become easier by acknowledging the effects that multimodality has in the creation and co-existence of various representations.

Finally, the broader community could benefit from the findings of the present study by gaining awareness on the way current events and issues are discussed on Tumblr. Additionally, more information could be gained on the quick and versatile manner recent and important events get discussed and circulated on social networking sites. Observations such as these could aid in finding new significance for social networking sites, particularly in comparison to traditional media outlets. The status of news in today's society has become complex since news are produced not only by journalists but also by ordinary people sharing observations on the world around them, for example with the aid of social networking sites. The continuous process of producing new information can make it difficult to distinguish real and false information, as well as significant and insignificant news from one another. Acquiring and critically observing information could become easier by acknowledging this constant process of producing and redistributing information that for example social networking sites, such as Tumblr, are involved in.

Tumblr's representations on racism and victims of police brutality could provide the general community with ideas on how modes are utilized in constructing meanings on such phenomena. Additionally, a deeper understanding on the effect modes separately and together have in constructing meanings on these issues and individuals could enable the community to better interpret these posts, and could even create more opportunities to discuss these matters in a varied manner. The meaning making opportunities provided by multimodality on Tumblr could promote the creation of more multimodally varied posts on all social networking sites, promoting the creation of comprehensive online discussions.

6.4 Evaluation

Due to the nature and length of a Master's thesis, certain limitations in scope were necessary to ensure that my research questions could be answered thoroughly. Even though the selection of a larger set of data would have yielded more material to analyze and would have enabled detecting more general trends, the detailed examination of such a dataset would have become impossible. As a result, the dataset of 50 cannot necessarily display general trends on Tumblr, but it certainly allows a more in depth examination of the data, producing more reliable analytical content.

The lack of research regarding social networking sites and multimodal representations hindered acquiring pre-existing frameworks for conducting analysis on the data. As a result, separate frameworks for analyzing visual and linguistic representations were crafted. Had my data contained more moving images in the form of videos, potentially another framework may have been necessary in analyzing the representations created by those elements. Examining each mode separately promoted their thorough investigation, but also required initially ignoring the interaction of several modes. Nevertheless, emphasis was placed on the attempt to examine, display and discuss this interconnectedness. Ideally, a comprehensive framework enabling the analysis of the presence of multiple modes at an earlier stage would have aided in examining the posts' representations in a more well-rounded manner, but in the present study, separate frameworks for examining linguistic and visual representations provided more precise tools for the careful analysis of each mode.

The selection of the key fields for the present study provided its own additional challenges. Even though social media is not commonly seen as a part of traditional media, media discourse analysis (MDA) was utilized in creating my framework for analyzing linguistic representations, due to Tumblr's intermittent way of functioning as an alternative channel for distributing current information, which can be seen to challenge traditional media. As a result, some adaptations were necessary to make the methods of MDA apply to the data at hand. MDA may overlook some crucial aspects of analyzing online data, as its common focus is on texts such as newspaper articles and television news reports. This justified the use of methods of computer mediated discourse analysis

(CMDA). Despite the lack of direct theories applicable to social networking sites, the most important meaning making tools of MDA can also be seen to function on data originating from social networking sites. All in all, the lack of previously crafted frameworks for analyzing multimodal online representations promoted creating one myself, which aided in the production of a framework which was specifically developed to suit the data of the present study, which promoted its suitability.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

Tumblr posts containing multimodality, collaboration and redistributed material could direct future research to focus on these phenomena on a broader scale. An overall quantitative examination on the use of the different modes on Tumblr could aid in generalizing the way Tumblr posts are constructed. Additionally, a more extensive examination on the use of various modes on social networking sites in general would yield new information, e.g. by studying the way modes are utilized on social networking sites in creating multimodal posts, particularly in relation to their capabilities of crafting meanings. Posts containing redistributed material or collaboration from several users could also be researched to explore how exactly Tumblr posts are constructed and how they relate to the broader group of social networking sites in terms of collaboration.

Since current research has examined the groups and communities on Tumblr, examining the representations those communities construct of themselves multimodally could provide valuable new information in relation to the identities and functions those groups have. Additionally, examining the self-representations of individual users (such as authors, actors or politicians, many of whom have their own Tumblr blogs) would promote conducting a more in depth analysis on how individual users represent themselves on Tumblr, as well as how they use the site, something which has already been researched in relation to Twitter (see Marwick and boyd 2011).

More specifically, Tumblr and its relation to other social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Vine[10] could also be examined. While some of the roles featured by these individual sites were briefly explored in the present study, a more thorough exploration on the specific functions and roles each site has could provide valuable information on the specific uses of each site, and the way these sites and their functions can support each other through redistribution of posts.

Additionally, future research could also benefit from exploring the collaborative side of Tumblr and social networking sites. Potential research topics could contain, for example, examining which social networking sites collaborate, what kinds of posts are redistributed and what kinds of functions these kinds of collaborative posts have on various sites. Altogether, a more thorough exploration on the collaboration of social networking sites is necessary, as it has not been previously researched and since many use several social networking sites simultaneously, enabling them to effortlessly produce collaborative material on these sites.

The shooting of Michael Brown also provides several potential research topics, as more comprehensive research is still required. For instance, examining the way Brown is represented in more official texts, such as news reports, newspaper articles and press releases, would further the examination regarding the way the shooting was represented. Similar research could be conducted on the Ferguson protesters, the Ferguson police, Brown's family or even other victims of police brutality. All in all, examining the construction of meanings relating to the shooting and the individuals and groups involved in it could provide more general information on the state of public discourse relating to modern day police brutality or even racism. Research such as this would also enable the creation of historical comparisons, e.g. in relation to the development of historical, public discourses on police brutality or racism.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study provided various insights into the way multimodality is present on Tumblr, and how the representations created by multimodal Tumblr posts discussed the shooting of Michael Brown. By utilizing text, images and

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[10] A social networking site originally linked to Twitter, used for creating and sharing short, six-second video clips.

moving images, various informational and emotion evoking meanings were formulated, aiming to educate other Tumblr users on the shooting of Michael Brown, an incident which seemingly continues an unfortunate presence of racism and police brutality in the US. By utilizing multiple modes, Tumblr posts enabled viewers to become closer to the matter and to view it from various different angles. As a result, multimodal representations can be seen to play a crucial role on the way Tumblr users view Brown's death and try to make sense of it, e.g. by relating it to racial struggles, his family's loss or the way he was represented in the media. Since meanings are as multi-layered and complex as their authors and audiences, the opportunities of creating meanings with multimodal tools seem endless, enabling the creation of multifaceted online content capable of making its audiences feel and experience things on a global scale both rationally and emotionally.

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