

African American Boys in Early Childhood Education (Elementary School) and Understanding the Achievement Gap through the Perceptions of Educators



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ABSTRACT

African American male students are suffering from a severe educational achievement gap. The U.S. Census Bureau has stated that only fifty percent of African American males will graduate high school (2001). Furthermore, African American males are statistically more likely to be incarcerated than to graduate from a four-year university. The researcher is broadly pursuing the question: Nationally, why do the majority of schools continue to struggle with closing the achievement gap for African American males? This research also examines the fact that some schools with a high concentration of African American males, over 15 percent of the student body, have made considerable strides in closing their African American males' academic disparity. The current research uses interviews with six elementary school educators in a Northern California school district to review the areas of academic success, cultural diversity, social justice, and parent involvement, in order to examine the way one public elementary school has had success in closing the achievement gap for their African American students.

Black males in American society are in trouble. The College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (2010) reports that a force currently exists that is threatening to pull the African American community apart. The United States currently has the highest rates of incarceration in the world, with the rates for African American men at historically high levels, which are considered by many to be in part the result of institutionalized racism (College Board 2010).

In media such as film and literature, African American men are often seen as villains, con men, overly aggressive, and embodying violence. In present-day sports, African American men are viewed most often on television as sport athletes leading their teams to a triumphant victory by landing the game-winning, buzzer-beating shot. Moreover, if African American men are not seen on television as athletes, they are heard on the radio releasing their latest hip hop or rap album. Yet, the majority of men are not currently living the lives of basketball phenomenon Kobe Bryant or hip hop mogul Jay-Z (Noguera 2008). The bulk of African American men are neither

superior athletes nor hip hop moguls, nor are they the villains lurking in the night. Nonetheless, African American men are battling against degrading stereotypes. When African American men, college students, and children have to prove themselves and fight against ingrained misconceptions, it is evident that something is especially wrong.

According to Haynes (1993), “all children, in the absence of a debilitating physical or psychological impairment, can learn.” Ethnicity and low socioeconomic status are not common impediments to high achievement; rather the social correlates (poverty, prejudice, insensitivity, low expectations) often diminish the chances of success for some minority children, in particular African American children (Haynes 1993). African American males are considered at a disadvantage academically when compared to their white peers and even compared to African American females. African American males are not born with an academic disadvantage, so at some point in their academic careers something has to occur to create this disproportionate achievement gap.

This research seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge and extend prior research with new theories and analyses about African American male children during early childhood education, with a specific focus on the years correlating to kindergarten through sixth grade. The ideal result is to improve the quality of education given to African American males in early childhood education, which would lead to a higher rate of success throughout their academic career and possibly decrease the rate of incarceration for African American males considerably.

The research will examine one elementary school that has made progress in closing the achievement gap of African American students. This public school, which contains a high percentage of African American students, has managed to overcome pervasive stereotypes, has high test scores, and has parent involvement during a time when other schools in the same school district have not.

Although most African Americans are aware of the importance of education, many still continue to suffer from poor school achievement, school failure, high rates of educational drop out, low college enrollment, over-representation in special education classes, and low standardized tests scores, reflecting an enveloping problem of educational underachievement among African Americans. The current research is guided by the following questions: Currently, what are some of the top issues that confront African American boys in early childhood education? What are the trends and issues that revolve around the discussion of educating African American boys? What are the ways in which schools are set up to engage children from diverse backgrounds?

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research is to add to the current body of knowledge pertaining to African American males in early childhood education. The research attempts to understand, through interviews of current educators at the elementary school level, how one school has managed to make gains in closing the achievement gap at their elementary school, while other schools are still struggling to do so. To this end, the researcher submits the question: How has this particular school managed to make considerable strides in closing their academic achievement gap for African American males? There are numerous studies that document the low achievement of African American males, yet the same cannot be said for the reasons behind the continuing existence of the achievement gap and interventions that can be taken to improve and prevent African American males' low academic success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will first address the following national educational policies that inform practice and that directly inform instruction highlights to academic achievement. Second, the No Child Left Behind Act will be reviewed in conjunction with seeing if its implementation has had the desired outcome. Third, a media article that received national attention for highlighting the academic discrepancies in Tennessee related to the issues that are occurring nationwide will be examined. This article shows that, despite current reforms, there are deeply rooted trends with regards to higher incidents of expulsion and suspension for African American male students. This will also be discussed. Fourth, the roles of parent involvement, testing and assessment, and stereotypes will be explored in relation to the roles these factors play in a child's overall academic performance and chances of success.

The education of African American males encompasses three influential dynamics: academic success, cultural diversity, and recognition of social justice. The strong representation of all three of these dynamics has been shown to yield positive results and without the strength of one, the other two dynamics struggle to compensate for the inadequacy. The foundation for the framework of these dynamics is strong parental involvement.

The researcher will attempt to answer the question: Nationally, why does the achievement gap still exist for African American males? The researcher will review the literature pertaining to academic success in terms of testing and assessment and the alarming educational gap between African American males and white students. Through the examination of academic success, the researcher will adhere to the notion of achievement ideology and the presence of this theory in the success of African American males. The notion of cultural

diversity also will be explored from the perspective of the educator and the role minority educators play in educating minority students, particularly African American males. Furthermore, social justice will be explored in respect to the higher rates of suspensions and expulsions of African American males, and the possibility that this trend influences the higher rate of incarceration for this group. Finally, parent involvement, the most critical aspect of a child's academic success, will be addressed. Also discussed is the evidence suggesting that when academic success, cultural diversity, recognition of social justice, and strong parent involvement are connected in the life of African American children, positive results are produced.

According to a report from the United States Census Bureau (2001), African Americans currently comprise nearly 13 percent of the total U.S. population. Over one-half of all African Americans in the United States live in large urban areas, and more than 35 percent of African Americans under age 18 live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). African American males have a 52 percent chance of dropping out of high school. In some cities, the rate is as high as 70 percent. While African American males currently make up 17 percent of the total school population, they account for 32 percent of the suspensions and 30 percent of all expulsions (U.S. Census Bureau 1999). African American male teens are placed in remedial or special education classes at triple the rate of their white counterparts, and they are underrepresented in gifted and honors classes. These statistical figures suggest that African Americans are over-represented among the poor, urban school-aged population. Because of environmental factors stemming from living in poverty (e.g., unemployment and exposure to crime and violence), researchers and educators have often applied the term "at risk" in reference to urban African American adolescents. Such a classification, however, could compromise the academic development of students because of the assumption that they are predestined to fail at academic pursuits or achievements. To combat this statistical inequity, the No Child Left Behind Act was put into effect.

No Child Left Behind Act

The No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law by President Bush in January of 2002. The No Child Left Behind Act has expanded the federal role in education and become a focal point of education policy. Coming at a time of extensive public concern about the state of education, the legislation set in place requirements that reach into nearly every public school in America, taking particular aim at improving the educational group of disadvantaged students. The opening passage of the No Child Left Behind Act gives a suggestion of its purpose, "An act to close the achievement gap

with accountability, flexibility, and choice so that no child is left behind.” At the core of the No Child Left Behind Act are a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. These measures represent significant changes to the educational landscape (U.S. Department of Education 2001). In an effort to close the gap, parents can request school vouchers for their children to transfer from failing schools into better-performing schools and federal funds can be withheld if schools do not make suitable progress toward increasing the test scores of all children. This has left a substantial amount of pressure on principals and teachers to get test scores up or possibly risk having federal funding withheld. Even though The No Child Left Behind Act proclaims to be a step in the right direction, a more decisive plan needs to be created for African American male students (Graves 2010).

Academic Success

To comply with the No Child Left Behind Act, academic success is the largest stressor for principals, teachers, and the state. African American children begin kindergarten with fewer reading skills than white children, even if their parents have equal years of schooling (Ferguson 2003). The underachievement of African American males starts when they first begin formal schooling. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2010), African American males have the lowest performance on standardized assessments of academic achievement. According to Graves (2010), contributing factors to African American males’ low academic performance are due over-representation in special education classes, low teacher expectations, and association with low-achieving peers (Graves 2010).

Contrary to the common belief that most urban African American adolescents struggle academically, 1,320 high-achieving minorities were identified in high-poverty schools in which students’ standardized test scores were in the top third of all schools in their state at respective grade levels. Thus, the relationship between the group of environmental stressors urban African American adolescents face and their academic performance is neither simple nor concrete (Jerald 2001).

The academic achievement gap, particularly the mathematics achievement gap, between black students and their white counterparts has been well documented. Furthermore, a recent Education Trust study using National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data documented that U.S. students were improving in their academic performance; it also noted that the achievement gap between black and white students related to mathematics, was increasing and that educators do not fully understand the reason.

It must be mentioned that African American males have achieved numerous gains in regards to their educational performance but national data are still clear indicators of the negatives that are still prevalent including the drop-out rate, suspensions, and expulsions. Their enrollment in post-secondary institutions such as colleges and universities continues to be a much lower percentage when compared to their peers (Garibaldi 2009). The individuals often left to fight for the education of the children are the educators themselves. However, one must consider what occurs in their interactions with students when educators are not trained to recognize the cultural differences in members of other ethnic/minority groups such as African American males.

Cultural Diversity

The role of educator encompasses so much more than test scores and complying with federal standards. It is a role that requires individuals to teach children about the world and, ultimately, themselves. This is made difficult for African American male students and others who see few role models who look like them in the ranks of teachers on school campuses. Increasingly, public school teachers are predominately white and female, while the numbers of African American teachers is decreasing (Ladson-Billings 2001). With the majority of teachers being white and female, it seems that the need for well-trained, culturally sensitive teachers who can understand the needs of diverse students is prevalent.

Since the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case in 1954, there has been a 66- percent decline in African American teachers. Currently, 17 percent of all students in elementary school are African American, yet only seven percent of teachers are African American. One percent of current educators are African American males with the majority of them being employed in middle schools and high schools (Roach 2010). It would not be uncommon for an African American male student to go from kindergarten to twelfth grade without seeing an African American male teacher.

Many African American college graduates who decide to enter teaching may face an unwelcoming environment, having experienced devaluation in the classroom. Delpit (1995) highlights teacher education programs and the environments therein as a significant reason for African Americans and other minority student teachers desiring to depart from the profession (Delpit 1995). Prospective teachers do not easily relinquish their beliefs, which developed from their own cultural and educational experience (Ladson-Billings 2001). African American student teachers often experience degradation of self-worth and of personal knowledge in the classroom (Delpit 1995). Nonetheless, for a student to make it into the classroom

is beneficial, but it seems that, for African Americans, spending adequate amount of time in the classroom has become an alarming challenge.

Social Justice

The factors surrounding the education of African American males are not simple or absolute, yet it is safe to assume more culturally aware classrooms that are equipped to handle the diverse needs of African American males are a necessity. Furthermore, some researchers have assumed that high grades, school attendance, and an absence of conduct issues are representative of psychological well-being in urban African American students. However, for some urban African American youth, engaging in such positive behaviors may result in bullying, ridicule, social isolation, reduced peer and social self-esteem, and feelings of community and cultural betrayal (Constantine et al. 1998; Steward et al. 1998; Wilson, Cooke, and Arrington 1997).

Nashville, Tennessee recently received nationwide media attention for an alarming trend highlighted in a Web article by John Mays, entitled *Nashville Middle School Suspends 50 Percent of Black Boys* (Blackvoices, 3 June 2010). The African American male students' plight received national attention in this article when it was brought to light that Nashville middle schools were suspending 50 percent of their black boys. The article's author, John Mays (2010) observed:

It's tough to be a black boy in Nashville, Tenn. Nine middle schools there have suspended half of their black male students at some point, more often than any other group. One school suspended 58 percent of its black male students, but just 10 percent of its white male students. Another suspended 58 percent of black boys but only 13 percent of white boys.

Percentages of suspensions this high at the middle-school level cause school-aged boys to miss valuable classroom information that could ultimately prepare them for tests, which could significantly impact their grades. Without the proper foundation for high school, they may test into remedial classes and fall further behind in trying to meet grade-level standards (Blackvoices 2010).

In Nashville, Tennessee this disparity is not only occurring at the middle-school level, it is occurring at local elementary schools too. This is not to state that some of the suspensions were not valid, the article points out that the inequality and high rate of suspensions cannot go without being further examined by school boards (Blackvoices 2010):

On the elementary school level, six schools suspended only black males, even though four of those schools have a mixed black and white population. In Tennessee, black kids are four times more likely to be suspended than other students. And the problem is not unique to Nashville. Nationally, black kids are suspended three times more often than whites.

This trend is not going unnoticed by the public and one attorney in particular, Larry Woods, has taken an active stance. He is suing the Nashville school district for inadequate textbooks and resources and wants to draw attention to the threat to minority students at these schools. This sort of treatment at such a young age only conditions these minority students further into negative behaviors and to expect poor treatment from others. Woods (Blackvoices 2010) stated:

The practice of treating black male students more harshly for behavioral problems is the first step for the school to prison pipeline, the trend of dealing with our children as criminals as opposed to the still developing, potential-filled young people that they are.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has even gone so far as to question the motives behind these schools pushing out their minority students. Because of the No Child Left Behind Act schools are feeling the pressure to drive out low-performing students in the hopes of increasing test scores (Blackvoices 2010). The article (Blackvoices 2010) cites ACLU findings that:

One study found that schools meted out longer suspensions to students who performed poorly in standardized tests than to high-performing students for similar offenses. This 'punishment gap' grew substantially during the period of time when standardized tests were administered, indicating that schools may use 'selective discipline' to keep low-performing students out of school during testing days.

The call to action is to show teachers ways to deal with a variety of students. They must learn to deal with students equally regardless of gender or ethnic diversity. Zero tolerance policies alone are ineffective and counterproductive. The single largest factor in African American males' academic future comes from their foundation. One cannot develop academic success, cultural diversity, or social justice without the foundational core of parent involvement.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is directly linked to positive school outcomes. The more active a role the parent takes in the child's education, the greater the outcome of positive success for that child. Graves states that parent involvement is complex and includes homework assistance, school participation, and active supervision (Graves 2010).

According to Jane Lawler Dye, in her U.S. Census Bureau report (2006) about father involvement and child well-being, there was a positive association between the involvement of the father in a child's life and the overall welfare of that particular child. Furthermore, Lawler Dye found that for younger children, consistent father involvement can lead to better behavior, psychological outcomes, and cognitive development. Yet for African American children in Lawler Dye's study (2006), only 69 percent of children actually ate dinner with their fathers compared to 81 percent of Hispanic children. In conclusion, Lawler Dye's findings suggest that father involvement was directly related to some aspects of child welfare such as disciplinary action in school; children who spent a significant amount of time with their fathers were less likely to have experienced disciplinary actions at school such as suspensions and expulsions (Lawler Dye 2006).

Sanders found that adolescents living in a single-parent household and below the poverty level were likely to question the relationship between educational achievement and economic progress (1998). Considering the over-representation of African Americans in this demographic cluster (U.S. Census Bureau 1999; 2001; 2002), urban school counselors frequently may encounter African American students who have similar experiences. These could include personal, family, and community experiences that may have more tangible and concrete meaning to these adolescents and, therefore, more influence on their academic and career-directed behaviors than conceptual teachings. Moreover, many urban African American adolescents may place higher priority on non-academic life responsibilities, such as work, family, and peer responsibilities, than on academic responsibilities (Boveja 1998).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher will use qualitative methods to understand and analyze the perspectives of teachers with regard to African American males. Through various texts, articles, and journals the researcher will gain an in-depth understanding of the current research with regard to African American males and their academics. The researcher will show the differences taking place at one elementary school and discuss how this school is making strides in closing the academic achievement gap for its African American male students.

Participants

The participants of the study were obtained from one elementary school in the Sacramento Unified School District. The principal and five teachers were selected, with one teacher meeting the qualifications of being a special-education teacher. A male teacher was encouraged to participate in the study to increase gender perspectives. Also, non-credentialed adults who come in contact with children on a daily basis were also selected from the after-school program to participate in the study.

Interview

To capture the perspectives of some of today's current educators, the study used interviews with four elementary school teachers (including a special-education teacher), one after-school care provider, and a school principal.

The subjects were recruited through known acquaintances. All the participants were current employees at a particular elementary school in the Sacramento region. Participants were notified of the study through flyers that were placed in their on-campus mailboxes. The teachers responded to the flyer and were selected based on the following criteria. They were required to be elementary school teachers (kindergarten through sixth grade). One of the participants had to be a male teacher. One of the participants had to be a special-education teacher. In addition to these requirements, the school's principal and the after-school care provider were highly encouraged to participate in the study to increase the spectrum of data collected.

The interviewing technique was used to facilitate contact and establish a trusting relationship with the participants of this study. A consent form was signed after participants agreed to be interviewed and the interviews were audio recorded. The participants' names were kept confidential.

The interview questions varied from closed- to open-ended. The variations in questions attempted to capture the enriched opportunity that presents itself in interviewing participants. The questions covered five topics: Testing/Assessment, Parent Involvement, Stereotypes, Teacher Work and Diversity, and Teacher Engagement. Each of the interviews lasted about one hour, and all the interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy of quotes. The interviewees were offered a copy of the recorded tape, and after the interviews were transcribed the recordings were destroyed. Participants were informed that privacy and confidentiality were of the utmost importance and that no information would be shared with their fellow co-workers at the elementary school.

DISCUSSION

The researcher will refer to the selected elementary as “Golden State Elementary School.” At this school, the researcher interviewed kindergarten, first and sixth grade, computer lab, and special-education teachers. The school principal and one after-school care provider were also interviewed. Each interview was conducted individually and all names were changed to protect participants’ privacy. The interview questions covered background, testing and assessment, stereotypes, parent involvement, and diversity.

Golden State Elementary

Golden State Elementary is located in the Sacramento Unified School District. It is a public elementary school, serving grades preschool through sixth grade. The school is striving to maintain its high attendance in conjunction with its success on the statewide test, the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. Golden State Elementary staff believe in promoting diversity in the classroom and that every student is capable of achieving high standards regardless of their racial background. The teachers get together for grade-level meetings in which they discuss the aforementioned topics, including the diversity balance in the classroom. This school is said to be “the opposite of the norm” by the teachers who currently work at the school, all of whom average between 10 and 25 years of teaching experience. The state average for elementary teacher experience is only 11 years. Despite the closure of schools around Golden State Elementary and an increase in its new student enrollment, the school has managed to keep its average classroom size to 21 students. The state’s average classroom size is currently 25 students (CA Department of Education 2008).

Teacher Background

Mr. Ferreter has been teaching elementary school for 25 years. He has taught kindergarten for 15 years and has taught the 5th grade for 10 years. This current academic school year, he has no African American males among the 12 male students in his class, yet, over the years he has had previous teaching experience with African American males. His current teacher-to-student ratio is 1 teacher for a class of 21 students. The Sacramento Unified School District is currently considering increasing the teacher-to-student ratio to 1 teacher for a class of 30 students.

Mrs. Woodward is celebrating her 20th year of teaching 1st grade. Her current teacher-to-student ratio is 1 teacher for a class size of 25 students. She currently has 4 African American males in her class, which includes 1 biracial student whose mother is Caucasian and whose father is African American.

Ms. Sunahara has been teaching elementary school going on her 7th academic school year. Her current teacher-to-student ratio is 1 teacher for every 28 students. She is highly concerned about the possibility of the Sacramento Unified School District increasing those numbers. She currently has 1 African American male out of the 15 males in her class, but in the previous years she has had a larger number.

Mr. Frankenburger has been teaching elementary school for 13 years, and before he started working as the media and visual instructor, he had taught the 4th grade. Classes currently rotate into the computer lab on a daily basis based on a schedule. He works with the entire school population, which is close to 600 students.

Ms. Chapin has been working with children for over 10 years as both a daycare provider and an after-school-care site director for the City of Sacramento. In this position, she is responsible for over 90 children after school until 6 p.m. and also has 5 staff working under her to support the program and the children. Each staff member has a cluster of children to whom they are assigned. The staff-to-student ratio is 1 to 20, with 1 staff member and Ms. Chapin not being counted in this ratio.

Mrs. Moore has been in charge of the Resource Specialist Program at Golden State Elementary for 11 years. She is currently operating her program as a learning center, which means she serves those students who have been identified with special needs, as well as those students who need additional curriculum support.

Dr. Eister is currently the principal at Golden State Elementary and has been in this position for 6 years. Before she became principal, Dr. Eister was a 4th grade teacher for 20 years in the Sacramento Unified School District.

FINDINGS

The researcher's findings yield a strong example of how the three dimensions of academic success, cultural diversity, and social justice affect African American males' academic performance. The role of parent involvement as a foundation for these three dimensions was a reoccurring theme mentioned throughout the teacher interviews. While looking at the techniques one school has used to close its academic achievement gap, the researcher considered the broad question: Nationally, why does the achievement gap still exist?

Academic Success

The STAR Program measures performance on the California Achievement Test and the California Content Standards Test. The STAR Program is the cornerstone of the California Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999

(PSAA). The primary goal of the PSAA is to help schools improve the academic achievement of all students. Each spring, California students in grades 2 through 11 must take a series of tests that comprise the state's STAR Program. These tests must be completed 10 days before or after 85% of the school year has passed. The California Standards Tests (CSTs) are designed to match the state's rigorous academic content standards for each grade. Grades 2 through 8 tests cover mathematics and English/language arts (which includes writing in grades 4 and 7). Except for the writing, all test questions are multiple-choice. California's school accountability system was originally based solely on scores from a previous test called the CAT/6. Through the Academic Performance Index (API), the scores drove the allocation of millions of dollars in intervention and award programs, depending on the health of the state's budget (California Department of Education 2009).

Ms. Sunahara, a Golden State Elementary teacher shared how she and other teachers encourage academics success in their students, "We use multiple choices on assessments to prepare the students for the STAR Test" (2010).

Dr. Eister (2010), the school's principal, stated that,

We reward our students based on attendance and performance, how hard they try, on the STAR Test. We give them a barbeque and we also do a raffle. This year a fourth grade girl won a camera from the raffle. We want our students to take pride and do well on this statewide test. We have consistently had high scores over the years.

Golden State Elementary has demonstrated through an assortment of awards that they are dedicated to every student succeeding regardless of race or ethnicity. Dr. Eister stated that over the past 10 years, ranging from the 2001 academic school year to the current one, Golden State Elementary has received over 30 awards. Dr. Eister (2010) added,

As a principal, joy comes from seeing the achievements of my students. We have been fortunate enough to be the recipients of numerous awards, a few of them being: No Child Left Behind National Blue Ribbon Award School, Distinguished School Award, Title 1 Academic Achievement Award School, and being identified by EDEquity Inc. as a school in the top 20% of all California schools in creating a culturally relevant and relational learning environment to foster academic excellence for African American students.

Teachers at Golden State Elementary are in agreement that their school is set apart from others. Other schools in the district are not scoring as high on the STAR Test as Golden State Elementary School. Part of their success

many come from their perspective that their minority students are just as academically strong as other racial groups. Ms. Sunahara (2010) observed,

Looking at my [students'] scores, it has been pretty diverse in terms of male-female ratio and [ethnicity]. A lot of my kids are of mixed race. I have African American, Mexican, Russian, and some are British. They are a very mixed, diverse student [body] that is at the top and score high on the STAR Test.

Cultural Diversity

Golden State Elementary is ethnically diverse with students ranging from African American to Latino and Russian. Teachers tell stories of students attending this school from Portugal who speak limited English. Heritage is currently part of the curriculum for each grade level. The school has taken an active role in modifying test and assessment questions to make them more welcoming to students of different backgrounds. Mr. Frankenburger (2010) stated,

If you give a word problem in math you always say 'Bobby and Susie.' Yet, in my adult class at night, I find that I use a diverse set of names, [which is] something I picked up from the elementary school in terms of being more diverse. Why does it always have to be 'Bobby and Susie'? Why can't it be 'Marelena and Sheron'?

Ms. Sunahara (2010) shared the following about cultural diversity at the school,

We have a unit in each grade dedicated to heritage. We want the kids to recognize that they do not all look alike and we want the kids to know that even if we all do not look the same on the outside, we are all the same on the inside. We all have feelings, think, and are here to be educated.

Social Justice

Rules and procedures are enforced at Golden State Elementary. Students are highly rewarded for doing well, but when rules are broken teachers, school officials and the principal take it very seriously. Although African American males typically are one of the most frequently suspended racial groups nationally, this is not the case at Golden State Elementary. Miss Chapin (2010) observed, "The children need consistency and boundaries. They need to know that these rules are here for them so they can have a safe and fun environment to come to on a daily basis." Ms. Sunahara added, "I don't see many African American males getting in trouble because the parents have been involved. I have more issues with my Russian boys" (2010).

Comparing Golden State Elementary & Sacramento Unified School District

Of the 24,280 males enrolled in the Sacramento Unified School District, 2,330 of them were suspended in 2006 (Figure 1), with over 800 of those suspensions being African American males. At Golden State Elementary, a school located in the Sacramento Unified School District, a total of 15 students were suspended in the same school year (Figure 2). Five of these students were African American and five were white.

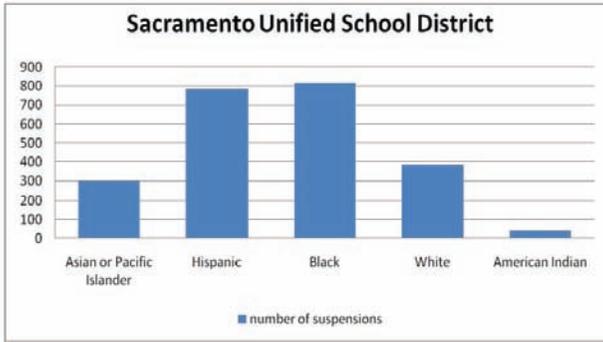


Figure 1. Rate of student suspensions in 2006, Sacramento Unified School District (Source: U.S. Department of Education, Civil Right’s Data Collection 2010)

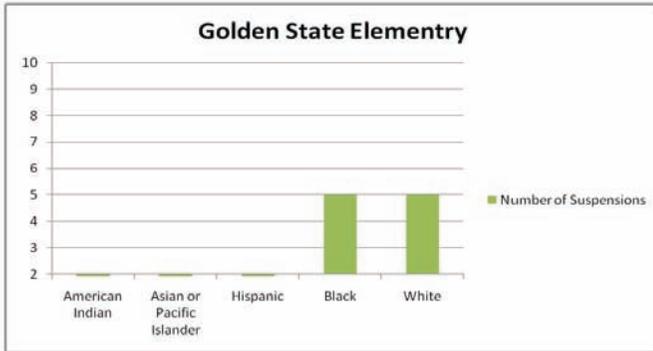


Figure 2. Rate of student suspensions in 2006, Golden State Elementary (Source: U.S. Department of Education, Civil Right’s Data Collection 2010)

Another cause for concern can be African American males and their association with special education programs. African American males are over-represented in special education programs and under-represented in gifted or honors programs. This is not the case at Golden State Elementary. Mrs. Moore operates the special education program as a learning center. The students that need special education are not separated from their peers. They spend a certain allotment of the day with her but the majority of the time in the classroom. Her goal is to see every child at or above grade level, regardless of the situation. Mrs. Moore (2010) observed,

I do have African American males that I work with, but they are not the majority; I'm proud to say that our school has made considerable efforts to keep minorities at or above grade level. This is not to say that I don't come across African American males that do not need the extra support because I do. But most frequently, we are dealing with the Hispanic population and the language barrier, but we are proud to say that we have two interpreters available.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is the foundation of the three dimensions discussed in this study. Part of Golden State Elementary's success can be attributed to the involvement of the parents. Because of state budget cuts, Golden State Elementary has come to lean very heavily on parents for support and funding. Currently, Golden State Elementary has a active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that has raised money for various student activities that, normally, would have been cut due to a lack of state funding. The Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program that operates after school to academically challenge students is an example. The school hosts a once-a-month event such as math night, science night or even art night that both parents and students may attend and receive a homework pass when they do. Miss Chapin (2010) stated,

I enjoy helping the school out with their family nights' after school. The after-school children love setting these up and getting to see all the fun projects before everyone else. I feel like I'm giving back to these children. They are not out on the streets or latchkey kids. They are in a safe and fun environment in my program.

The Golden State Elementary School Web site has a call to action to parents from Mrs. Wallace (2010), the president of the PTO, stating the benefits of getting involved in their children's schooling, including,

Research has shown that when a family is involved in a child's educational experience, that child will earn better grades, have better social skills and will have a more positive attitude toward school.

Parents have responded well by taking an active role in their children's education, African American parents, in particular, are responding to the call. There are numerous African American parents on the PTO board and they actively attend parent-teacher conferences, school events and activities. Ms. Sunahara (2010) shared this observation about the school's high level of parent involvement,

In my past experience, since I have had a lot more African American male students in my class, they score very high and that comes from parent support and the relationship I have with them in the classroom. But I think we are the flip or opposite of what people think as the norm, as far as African American males go, because here they are more on the high side academically. African American parents, in my opinion, have been very involved. It doesn't matter what race they are, I think involvement should be from everybody. From my experiences, the parents have been involved and that is why they [the students] are so successful.

The importance of parent involvement cannot be stressed enough. Teachers at Golden State Elementary stated that parents have the students for the first five years of life, and what they teach their children critically affects the way the students view school. Ultimately, if the parents have a strong concern for their child's schooling that child statistically will perform better academically. Mr. Ferreter (2010) observed,

I was lucky if I was able to get two or three parents to attend parent conferences or back-to-school night. At [Golden State Elementary], I had every parent attend except one, and they called apologizing and set up a time to meet.

When a child attends school, what the parent has put into them is either a supportive uplifting factor to their education or it is a hindrance, and something the teacher or educator must fight against. In the end, what the parent has instilled in a child may overcome anything the teacher tries to go against.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that Golden State Elementary closed the achievement gap by meeting the needs of its African American male (and female) students. The school encompassed academic success; the students attend a school where high academic achievement was expected and rewarded, thus making African American males strive harder to achieve that level because it was expected. Golden State Elementary did not experience a disproportionate gap in terms of social justice. The school had a total of 15 suspensions for the entire 2006 school year, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2006), and African American males received only five of those suspensions (see Figures 1 and 2). Moreover, its African American students participated in a culturally diverse campus. Students embodied numerous racial and cultural backgrounds, and, from the opinions of the educators, developed the ability to be color-blind to peers' racial

differences in addition to learning tolerance. Yet, the groundwork for success had been laid at Golden State Elementary because of parent involvement. Parents are choosing to play an active role instead of relying on the teachers to be the only contributing factor in their child's education.

The researcher concludes that the complex nature of educating the African American male is not done being explored by researchers. As stated by the College Board (2010), a dichotomy exists in our nation's system of public education where some schools foster high academic achievement and have dynamic and qualified teachers, while other schools in the same public school education system face major problems. These problems include unprepared teachers, astonishingly low academic achievement, and low expectations for students to graduate from high school (College Board 2010).

Although the fact still remains that African American males are more likely to be behind prison walls than behind the walls of a four-year university, something has to be done at the elementary school level to change this. America is losing its youth to a factor known as the "pipeline to prison," a mentality among many young males that shuns high academic achievement and directs them to display their masculinity through activities that are stereotypically cool and macho, which may include the recruitment of young males of a low-socioeconomic status into a lifestyle involving gang affiliation, drug selling, and, ultimately, over-representation in prison (College Board 2010).

Golden State Elementary is an example of how the public school system can alter the course of African American males' academic and life experiences. They are succeeding at closing the academic achievement gap for this group and others by fostering academic success, recognizing cultural diversity, and employing social justice—all of which are bolstered by active parent involvement.

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The Government and New Media: The White House's Use of Twitter



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ABSTRACT

New media are rapidly replacing traditional modes of communication. Social networking sites have found an almost immediate domination among other forms of communication. Even the U.S. government has pages on these sites. This study analyzes how the White House uses new media by examining the tweets, or posts, made by the White House on Twitter, a micro-blogging social networking site. A content analysis of 463 posts spanning a three-month period revealed themes involving policy, events, and characters. An abundance of links, typically at least one per post, shows that the White House uses Twitter to post 'headlines.'

The decade between 2000 and 2010 brought a dramatic evolution in the nature of communication for people all around the world. The swift rise and widespread use of new media changed how individuals and groups interact. This progression of communication media rapidly transformed from email to instant messaging to text messaging to blogging and on into social networking sites. Information exchange became ubiquitous like never before. Typing a simple keyword into an online search engine produces a cornucopia of knowledge available to all people with Internet access. Whereas, before, most media were separated, new media are now interconnected and have integrated the remaining benefits of traditional media as well. McLuhan (1964) said, "a new medium is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace. It never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new shapes and positions for them" (158). This phenomenon is certainly the disposition of new media. The capabilities and potential of new media seem never-ending. Now, in the time of their infancy, there is the greatest need to understand these new media.

Communication between leaders and the public is an essential element of society. In the United States, this communication includes presidential addresses and a variety of other messages concerning laws and court decisions, and information on social issues and foreign affairs. Initially, these

messages were relayed through public speeches, newspapers, and other traditional media. However, presidents have used whatever new technologies were available to them at the time. Calvin Coolidge was the first president to address the nation on radio in 1924. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first president to appear on television in 1939, and Harry S. Truman was the first president to give a presidential address on television in 1947. Bill Clinton was the first president to create an official government Web page on the Internet in 2000 (originally FirstGov.gov until 2007 when the site changed its name to USA.gov). The U.S. government continues to utilize these media today.

Barack Obama was the first president to use social networking sites on the Internet in 2009. Some of these sites include Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, and Twitter. A number of federal agencies, including the White House, also began using these sites following the president's lead. The Obama administration's plan for new technology was to bring the government into the 21st century by taking advantage of modern innovations, especially with new media.

Social networking sites are designed to facilitate communication between individuals and groups who share common interests. Usage of these sites is usually free and available on a global scale. Users must start an account in which a profile is created and the opportunity for various levels of self-disclosure is given. Users then create networks to communicate with other users, typically through text, images, video posts, and blogging. A "blog," which is a condensed term for "web log," is a narrative on any topic that is posted online, typically on a social networking site or in a forum. Blogs may also contain images or links. A "link" is an active line of text or an image that connects a user to another Web page when clicked.

Twitter is a social networking site that is designed for microblogging, created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey. The site allows users to post messages (or tweets) of up to 140 characters of text at a time, hence the term "microblogging." Networks are created by either being a follower of another user or by being followed by another user. Hashtags, indicated by a "#" sign and a phrase indicating the specific topic, are used as links to a collection of tweets that facilitate discussion on a sole topic (Farhi 2009). An example of a hashtag is "#fff," which stands for "follow friday." This is a hashtag where any user can suggest to others users who to follow by providing a list of @usernames. The collection of tweets is formed by presenting each tweet that has the same hashtag posted within it. Also, "@username," which is an account user's profile name following the "@" sign, is often placed within tweets to connect that user to the message or as a topical reference. Shortened URLs, the address of a Web page, are also placed in many tweets. This feature is a way to place a Web page link within the post without using

up much of the post's limited text space. This paper will discuss how the government uses new media by looking at the White House uses its profile on the social networking site Twitter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Few research studies have been conducted on the topic of online political communication because of the newness of social networking sites and other online fora. Additionally, how political commentators create new communication techniques with innovative new media is still in an explorative phase with few published works. However, there are some recent studies that reflect the current shift toward the new media paradigm of political communication in an online setting.

According to Mutz and Martin (2001), "as the number of potential news sources multiply, consumers must choose among them, and that exercise of choice may lead to less diversity of political exposure" (13). In turn, the popularization of the Internet has increased the number of information sources available, and allowed a wide diversity of thought to be expressed, including political commentary, by anyone with access. Furthermore, Stroud (2008) found that "different media outlets may transmit different perspectives to different audiences" (360). Audiences of traditional media sources may have a different demographic than users of new media. In addition to changes in information sources, there are also changes in media to target audiences more narrowly.

According to Holbert and Geidner (2009), "candidates and public policy issues are now promoted as representative of some element of a specific lifestyle" (355). Ancu and Cozma (2009) show "that MySpace candidate profiles mainly gratify visitors' needs for social interaction with other candidate supporters, as well as for information seeking and entertainment needs" (576). Politicians' online profiles are designed to attract a person's lifestyle, but supporters use the space to have discussions with and listen to other supporters. As a result, this process increases the constituents' self-efficacy as they are also drawn to sources that reflect the same beliefs and where they are able to interact with candidates and other supporters. Kaye and Johnson (2002) stated that, "like talk radio and call-in television, the Internet is thought to boost self-efficacy because it allows viewers or listeners the opportunity to hear individuals like themselves articulate their political views" (67). Most people are attracted to others who share the same opinions, and their meeting spots are still located around the opinion leaders and political candidates they support. As media took a leap from traditional to new, the sources people consult changed. Whereas television and radio

news shows were once primary sources of information, now anyone with an Internet connection can post a viewpoint and connect with others who share their viewpoint.

Kaye and Johnson (2002) noted that, “the Internet provides a wealth of political information, including a considerable amount of material that has not been filtered, edited, or scrutinized by traditional media” (66). Furthermore, Stroud (2008) discovered that, “political beliefs play an important role in determining where people turn for political information” (360). Research has shown how the news media are affected by these new conditions, how politicians are gaining more attention and support through new media, and how supporters use new media to communicate with like-minded people through the sites of the candidates they support. Yet, there is still one enormous information source that has been left out: the government, especially the federal government, and even more specifically, the executive branch. Since studies have shown that peoples’ interest in media has altered the scene of information flow, one could infer that the public would react to government presence in online media. There remains the intriguing question: How the executive branch of the government uses new media? This paper will explore this question by analyzing how the White House uses the social networking site Twitter.

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis was used to identify patterns of usage by looking at the White House’s posts on Twitter and by organizing them into different data categories. “Content analysis” is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics or messages (Holisti 1968, quoted by Twycross and Shields 2008). Additionally, content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal, or visual communication messages (Cole 1988, quoted by Elo and Kynga 2007). Recently, Fullwood, Sheehan, and Nicholls (2009) used this method to conduct research on the style, format, and expression of MySpace blogs available in the public domain. Their results show that content analysis is an applicable method to study social networking sites. The present research used content analysis to focus on the Twitter posts of the White House.

Purposive sampling was used to collect all of the tweets, or posts, in the most recent three months. This time frame was chosen because of the need to find patterns throughout the posts, and three months was identified by the researcher as sufficient time for patterns of use to develop. This sample consisted of 463 tweets. The sampling technique used was appropriate because the most recent White House posts revealed patterns of usage with

more accuracy than older posts, given that, at the time of sampling, the White House's Twitter account was approximately 1.5 years old. A codebook was used for analysis to categorize and measure the content of each of the posts in this sample. The researcher initially viewed individual posts so as to categorize them according to a few selected elements. A later analysis placed each post from each category into further defined sub-categories.

The first organizing element was themes identified throughout the posts. These units of analysis included policy-oriented tweets and event-oriented tweets. "Policy-oriented posts" included health care, Wall Street reforms, nuclear issues (including the New START Treaty), and economic issues, which consisted of employment and jobs, the Recovery Act, and more. "Events-oriented posts" focused on crisis situations, holidays and national days, national announcements and events, and international announcements and events. Of course, some tweets contain an overlap of policy- and event-oriented issues. For example, healthcare was discussed much more dominantly as a policy-oriented topic, though there were event-oriented tweets on health care as well. Whichever side the issue in the tweet was more dominantly focused on (policy or event) throughout the entire sample would determine how each individual tweet was categorized. Next, the researcher identified characters, such as President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, First Lady Michelle Obama, and an assortment of other people. Even a dog has been identified as a character. Lastly, links in the posts, including hashtags, @usernames, shortened URLs, and Web sites were sorted.

RESULTS

The content analysis provided a series of results. The first unit of analysis was Themes. Each tweet was placed in either the policy-oriented category or the event-oriented category but not both (Appendix A). The policy-oriented category contained 220 tweets and the event-oriented category contained 243 tweets. The policy-oriented category was separated into four subcategories. The first subcategory was healthcare and encompassed 141 tweets. Next, the economic-issue subcategory included 46 tweets. Third, the nuclear-issues subcategory contained 18 tweets. Nine of these tweets regarded the New START Treaty. Finally, the Wall Street Reform subcategory earned 15 tweets.

Next, the event-oriented category was analyzed and broken down into four distinct subcategories. The national announcements and events subcategory was the most prominent and held 166 of this category's tweets. Next, the international announcements and events and the emergency situations subcategories held 29 tweets each. The crisis situations subcategory was divided

into five segments. First, the BP oil spill in the Gulf collected 12 tweets. The flooding in Tennessee and the Southwest received five tweets total, as did the West Virginia mine collapse. The earthquake in Chile and the threat of a tsunami received four tweets. The Haiti earthquake incident earned three tweets. Finally, the holiday and national days subcategory gained 19 tweets.

The second unit of analysis was Characters. Each person mentioned anywhere in the tweet was recorded and categorized. There were tweets that did not mention any person, while some tweets contained remarks about multiple individuals. Recording was based on frequency of reference to each person, not on whether a tweet mentioned a character or not. A person was recorded if either that person's name or title was mentioned, or if there was a direct suggestion of that person. Direct suggestions included either remarks made about a person who is significant to the meaning of the message or follow-ups about a character from a previous post. A total of 76 characters were reported in the sample. These characters accumulated 359 appearances. Of them, President Obama emerged with the greatest number of appearances at 168. Next in line, First Lady Michelle Obama appeared in 18 tweets. Third, Dan Pfeiffer, the White House Communications Director, appeared in 12 tweets. Vice President Joe Biden and White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs were both mentioned nine times. Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director of the White House Office of Health Reform, and Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services, each appeared in seven tweets. Few of the other characters surfaced close to the magnitude of those aforementioned. However, although unidentified here, the other characters identified in the tweets should not be ignored. One character was mentioned six times; four characters were mentioned five times; six characters were mentioned four times; four characters were mentioned three times; 14 characters were mentioned only twice (including the Obama family dog, Bo); and 40 characters were mentioned only once.

The third unit of analysis was the Links present in each tweet. Categories discussed in this section include hashtags, @usernames, shortened URLs, and Web sites (Appendix B). Fifteen tweets contained none of these elements, and the most links in one tweet were 11, though most tweets only had between one and three. A total of 34 hashtags appeared 104 times. Twenty-four were mentioned once, three were mentioned twice, three others were mentioned three times, three more were mentioned four times, and one was mentioned 45 times. The one mentioned forty-five times was for healthcare (hashtag = #hcr). There were 55 @usernames in the sample and they occurred 177 times. Of these, 24 were followers of the White House, and they created 40 tweets. Fifteen different shortened URLs were present and were included 406 times total. Four Web sites were posted for a total of five times.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study found multiple patterns of usage. Themes, the first unit of analysis, disclosed a couple points of interest (Appendix A). First, the policy-oriented subcategory of healthcare captured just over 30 percent of all the tweets in the sample. This spotlights how popular and momentous this single issue was and indicates that the White House provides much information on popular national issues. Furthermore, this data show what the government talks about to its citizens. The event-oriented subcategory of national announcements and events took over 35 percent of all the tweets in the sample. This subcategory consists of information regarding recent decisions in the government, discussions to take place in the future, and other similar current events within the country, with the exception of those in other subcategories. Announcements and events were placed together because many of the announcements were about upcoming events, although quite a few were about actions recently taken. This subcategory spans a wide range of areas, though no significant patterns appeared within them. The significance of this subcategory lies in the pattern of communicating on a day-to-day basis, and often in much smaller measurements of time, regardless of the announcement or event. Between both categories of themes, 65 percent were from healthcare, and from national announcements and events. This recurrence reflects the White House's exigency for awareness of national issues. This data, in addition to each of the other subcategories, suggests that the White House's intent is to provide people with coverage of its immediate workings.

The second unit of analysis, Characters, also provided patterns of usage. Of all the appearances of characters, President Obama appeared in over 46 percent of all the tweets. It seems natural that the position of president would warrant an overwhelming majority of appearances, as the title holds so much significance to the country. As First Lady Michelle Obama was second in the number of appearances, there may be a pattern of promoting the popularity of this particular presidential family. Dan Pfeiffer's name was third most common, though only found in the @username form (Appendix B). This reveals him, as the White House Communications Director, to be a continuous source of information even though only a little more than three percent of appearances were his. This is important because it identifies specific sources of information within the White House, rather than presenting information exclusively. The characters of Vice President Biden, White House Press Secretary Gibbs, Director of the White House Office of Health Reform Deparle, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Sebelius appeared even less but are included because of the information related to their positions and areas of work that appeared in the tweets. Twenty-nine other characters were mentioned between two to six times in tweets, and 40 characters were mentioned just once. In total, these characters

appeared just under 20 percent of the times characters were mentioned. The pattern here tells of the many people involved in government affairs and of their topical actions and connections therein. This pattern is significant because it provides information on who is involved, what each person's particular role is, and their actions that contribute to the efficacy of the government.

The third unit of analysis was the Links present in each tweet (Appendix B), which also revealed a series of patterns. Health care was dominant in the appearance of hashtags, with almost a 46 percent dominance among them all. This finding further reinforces the pattern of usage based on popularity and importance, as seen in the Themes categories (Appendix A). However, there is little to no patterning between any of the other hashtags. Still, the remaining 32 hashtags, which accumulated 59 appearances, are important. The wide variety of topics also supports the pattern of providing information on the basis of when it occurs or can become available on a mass level through the media. There were also 55 @usernames present 177 times (Appendix B). This finding suggests that there are a large number of sources who provide information on this site. Only @dooce, @SecPress, and @whitehouse stand out from this group, though their prominence does not appear to be dominant among the whole collection of @usernames.

There were 15 different shortened URLs posted, which were used 406 times, and there were 4 Web addresses posted just 6 times (Appendix B). As explained previously, the difference between a shortened URL and a Web address is only in the capacity of each to take up space within the post. Of all of these, the only noticeable repetition is from the shortened URL "http://bit.ly," which is used by the White House's Twitter account as a shortcut to www.whitehouse.gov. The Web page <http://bit.ly>, without any added text following the address, is a site where URLs can be shortened. For example, <http://bit.ly/aggEu5> is the shortened URL for the lengthy Web address of <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/photogallery/first-lady-mexico>, which displays a set of photographs of First Lady Michelle Obama in Mexico. This shortening of the actual Web address reduced 73 characters of text to 20. This link is used 340 times out of the 406 posts included throughout the sample. Overall, the presence of such a large and consistent number of links revealed that the small space made available to communicate with on Twitter is being used as 'headlines' by the White House, because the links provide further information of substance related to the tweet. The significance of this finding is that the White House utilized Twitter as a journalistic tool to quickly provide short updates, but also allow for additional information to be obtained. As Twitter is a stream of short messages, this technique greatly reduces the clutter of information that followers may find superfluous or unwanted because it may be irrelevant to them personally.

This is significant because it exhibits how the White House uses Twitter to disclose lots of information quickly on many issues without diverting followers from the information most relevant to each of them.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The most important limitation of this study is also one of its strengths. The government is early in its usage of new media and this study is a snapshot of its beginning. Though it is important to see how usage is pioneered in its early phase to examine its current standing and potential progression, it is likely that some of the patterns found in this study will evolve. Future research would certainly be beneficial on this topic in order to see how changes occurred and why. Additionally, research on other new media may have different results due to their unique characteristics. Research on how the government reaches different audiences, and who these different audiences are, on each new media may also provide improvement.

CONCLUSION

New media brings an exponentially greater amount of information to anyone with access to them. In fact, this increased speed of information exchange has already fundamentally changed the nature of communication for the entire world. The U.S. government's participation in these new media has just begun to evolve, and there is a great need to understand how. This study looked specifically at the White House's use of the social networking site Twitter to reveal a series of usage patterns. The White House profile on Twitter is managed as a mass media tool to provide information concerning current government affairs. Significantly, there is an emphasis on immediacy of information, as many tweets are posted through a moment-by-moment lens. The White House's intent is focused on spreading awareness of government functions, and, in turn, may be viewed as a means of increasing transparency. Prior to the emergence of this new media, there were few resources available that could effectively and efficiently provide as much attention to all of the issues as brought forth on the White House's Twitter account. Furthermore, the wide range of characters presented in the tweets illuminate many of the different functions of the government, by explaining the roles and actions of people involved in government affairs. Within the content of nearly every tweet is at least one link to a Web page. This technique provides information in the fashion of a "headline with article attached." This continuous flow of information, without the potential clutter, communicates effectively and quickly. The milieu of the government has been greatly opened through the use of this new medium.

Additionally, the White House uses its Twitter account in order to be a news source, often detailed and contemporaneous, for many of its own activities. The range of new media now available have powerfully extended the government's reach by enabling it to rapidly share important updates with its enormous following of well over 1,700,000 people and organizations on Twitter. Confirming this, McLuhan said, "A speed-up in communication always enables a central authority to extend its operations to more distant margins" (96). The inception of profiles and accounts on social networking sites by the government has just began to revolutionize its communication sphere and will inevitably initiate a presence in most, if not all, new media as they arise.

APPENDIX A. THEMES

Policy	# of times mentioned
Economy (employment, Recovery Act, etc.)	46
Health Care	141
Nuclear Issues	18
Wall Street Reform	15
Event	# of times mentioned
Emergency Situations	29
Holidays and National Days	19
National Announcements and Events	166
International Events	29

APPENDIX B. LINKS

Hashtags	# of times counted
#arra	2
#CPSC	1
#datagov	1
#drugstrategy	1
#endmalaria	1
#esummit	1
#FF	5
#finreg	1
#gcedd	1
#gmu	1
#gop	1
#green	1
#Haiti	1
#hcr	45
#healthreform	2
#imtiredofseeing	1
#nashvilleflood	4
#MLB	1
#NuclearSecuritySummit	1
#obamagmu	1
#obamaYTinterview	3
#OFQ	1
#potusfistbump	1
#questiontime	4
#S	2
#SecClinton	1
#smallbiz	1
#SOTU	1
#StateOfTheUnion	1
#TEDstate	1
#whgc	3
#WIF	1
#worldmariaday	1
Total # of Hashtags Used	33
Total # of Hashtags in Sample	104

@usernames	# of times Counted	White House following
@AmbassadorRice	2	
@BET	1	
@billburton44	7	X
@BusinessDotGov	2	X
@CNN	1	
@connect2mason	1	
@CraigatFEMA	2	X
@cspan	1	
@demetrogirl	1	
@Disabilitygov	1	X
@dooce	13	
@EDPressSec	2	
@ezraklein	1	
@FCC	1	X
@GLEEonFox	2	
@GOOD	1	
@HealthReformNow	1	X
@HHSGov	4	
@housedemocrats	2	
@huffpostcollege	2	
@JRMorber	1	
@justinbieber	4	
@KateAtState	1	X
@lacasablanca	1	X
@lisapjackson	2	X
@macon44	5	X
@MLB	1	
@MLBLineDrives	1	
@NASA	1	X
@NationalZoo	1	
@NavelEnergy	1	X
@NavyNews	2	
@nytimes	1	
@ONDCP	1	X
@OnSafety	1	X
@petesouza	2	X
@PressSec	20	
@RayLaHood	1	

@usernames	# of times Counted	White House following
@RecoveryDotGov	1	X
@RobAtState	1	
@SaraBareilles	1	
@SecLocke	1	X
@SECNAV	1	X
@ServeDotGov	1	X
@StateDept	1	X
@thejointstaff	1	X
@TheJusticeDept	1	
@timryan	1	X
@twitter	2	
@usacurrency	1	
@USATODAY	2	
@USDAFoodSafety	1	X
@whitehouse	10	
@whitehouseostp	2	X
Total # of @username	55	24
Total # of @username posts	177	39
Total # of @username posts following the White House	40	24

Shortened URLs	# of Times Counted
http://bit.ly	340
http://c-span.org	1
http://epa.gov	2
http://go.usa.gov	2
http://huff.to/aDjOim	1
http://is.gd	1
http://ow.ly	3
http://nyti	4
http://stopfraud.gov	1
http://tiny.cc/cv46n	1
http://tinyurl.com/esummitlive	1
http://tweetpic.com	8
http://ustre.am/6AET	1
http://wh.gov/live	36
http://youtube.com	4
Total # of shortened URLs	15
Total # of posts	406

Web Sites	# of Times Counted
www.creditcards.com	2
www.hhs.gov/live	1
www.letsmove.gov	1
www.newmoney.gov	1
Total # of www links	4
Total # of posts	5

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