


... and the public's response



DATA

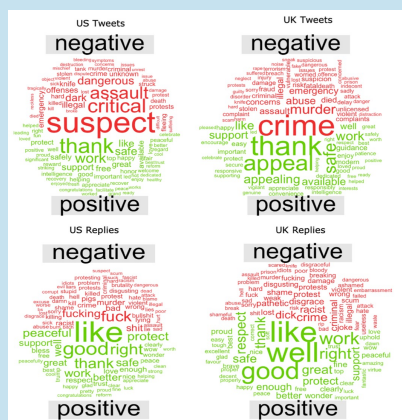
Key aims of police social media usage are increasing public perceptions of legitimacy and showing a commitment to transparency ¹. This is particularly important in times of heightened political tension. George Floyd's murder incited a large public response, mainly directed towards the police.

Analysis:

Pre-processing:

- String operations (regular expressions)
- Tweet tokenization
- Stop-word removal
- Sentiment analysis
- Term frequency over time
- N-grams

Figure 1 – Sentiments of the most common words by country and tweet type



- US tweets mention 'protest' more than the UK
- 'Racist' is one of the most common words in UK replies
- Positive words outweigh the negative in US and UK replies

Word co-occurrences provide more context:

- Phrases like 'excessive force', 'held accountable', and 'please stop killing', 'please explain', or 'please stop lying' show a critical public response
- 'Cops' is linked to 'bad apple', but also 'good' and 'great' – mixed attitudes
- 'laughingstock' or 'oink' suggest fun is being poked at police

Figure 2 – Co-occurrences of commonly used words

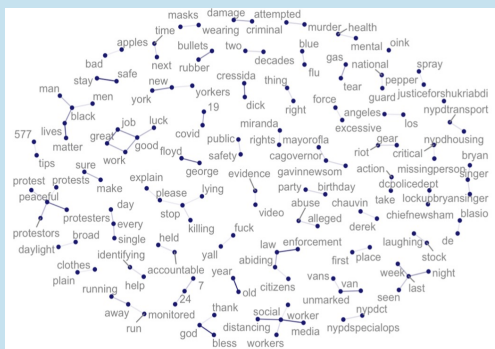
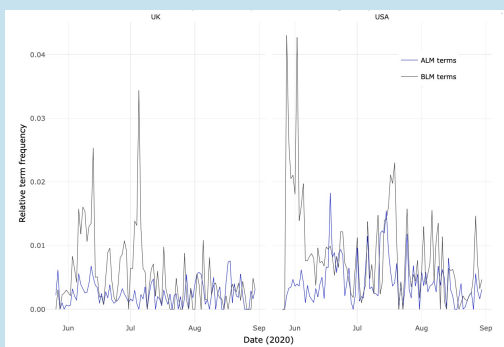


Figure 3 – The use of ALM and BLM terminology throughout the period



In both countries there are only a few instances where the counter movement terms overtake BLM terms. The use of BLM terms peak in the US much closer to the death of Floyd, whereas in the UK it takes a few weeks to rise. Relative to BLM terms, there is more ALM in the US compared to the UK.

N.B. the use of a term \neq support of the movement ³

Discussion

Neither police force had a central focus on the protests or events after the death of George Floyd. Even though they were mentioned, the key elements of police tweets were passing on information regarding crimes and thanking the public ('pushing' and 'pulling' information rather than directly addressing current events ⁴). Both US and UK replies were full of aggressive, critical, insulting, and mocking language towards the police, as well as engaging with the political terms which either directly support or disavow police relations.

Recommendations

Techniques which would improve the pre-processing/analysis:

- Lemmatization
- Named-entity recognition
- Deep-learning techniques (better with informal language)

- Consider Twitter user demographics
- Extract tweets from officer or local accounts (research shows these can be more active) ⁵

References

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