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## **The spark of a movement**

A study of an online collective acts potentiality to grow into a social movement

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Master's thesis SOCM04 30 credits  
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Supervisor: Charalambos Demetriou

# **Abstract**

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Social movements have become an integrated component in our western society with almost every contested issue having a social movement associated to it, on at least one side of the debate. When we think of social movements in practice, we might picture rallies and marches, chants, and demonstrations but with the emergence of social media more and more activists and movement adherents have moved to the online forums and are utilizing social medias features to quickly spread their messages and to easier mobilize. Because of its ability to attract and engage large number of people, online activisms generate a lot of attention from the media. When Sarah Everard was murder on her way home from a friend, people took to social media to express their grievances. This grew to a scale where media called the online activities a movement. But is it a movement? Using the extensive literature on social movements as a yardstick, focusing on what is considered criteria for a social movement, this study looked at the twitter content following Sarah Everards death along with some of the events that followed to see if there is something that implies that this can grow into a social movement. Results showed that key factors like collective action and collective identity are visible in the data, but it is only in limited form and in its initial stages. There is also potential for a coalition to form but there is no evidence for the initiative for one. In the end, two major factors were missing for there to be a definite movement formation: longevity and organisation, although data suggest potential for it as well. Although the data showed potential for growth, his study was done to close after the main event for the factors to solidify.

Keywords: Sarah Everard, social movement, online, collective action, collective identity, organisation

## **When a collective act becomes a social movement**

Popular science summary

When we as citizens want to see change in our society we come together and present claims and demands to the powerholders. This can be in the form of a march, protest or petition signing. When a collective is passionate about a cause they set out to gather supporters, mobilize them and over time show the powerholders in different ways and through different collective acts, and usually under a collective name or symbol that they want to see change. In simple terms, this is how a social movement is formed. It requires planning and a level of organisation for a movement to progress and to establish. Ever since social media became a major part of how we manage our social life it was only natural for activists and movement supporters to take advantage of the different platforms functions to reach out and spread their message much faster. Now a call for mobilization or a call for attention to an issue can reach millions of people with just a click and it makes it almost effortless for people to show support while still making an impact. Movements like #Metoo and Black Lives Matter are prime examples of this.

With the growth of social media use, the efforts for collective action and mobilization have never been easier and it has thereby fast-tracked some of the factors that go into establishing a social movement. This study will investigate whether an online collective act and the events coming from it can grow into a social movement. In this case the focus is on the online activities that followed the disappearance and murder of Sarah Everard, that took place in the beginning of March of 2021. By using the current literature on social movements, which is all based on offline, real-life movements, I wanted to see how the online events fit in with the traditional social movement criteria. This study started only a month after the event happened that set of the online movement so the lack of longevity was an issue from the start. However, the results showed that a lot of the elements needed to establish a social movement are there. It just requires someone to take the reins and start organising.

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## **1. Introduction**

In our western society expressing one's opinion and taking stance on certain topics or issues is considered our right. Events like protest actions, rallies, and marches, along with social movements and political organizations whose views are unaligned with politicians and political parties have become permanent components in our western communities. Today, it is hard to think of a contested social issue that does not have a social movement associated to it, on at least one side of the debate. When we think of social movements, we might picture masses of people chanting in unison, or big crowds marching with signs. We might think of a particular slogan or logo, a specific person, or a specific event. There are many components that make up a social movement, each as important as the next.

Scholars have provided many definitions of what a social movement is, but they all encompass the same attributes. Snow (2013) describes social movements as "collective actions through which aggrieved collective give voice publicly to various grievances and press relevant authorities to attend to the associated claims and/or demands" (p.1), and Klandermans (2004) described social movements as "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites and authorities" (p. 269). Lastly, Tilly (1993) explains that social movements are "a sustained challenge against powerholders in the name of a population living under jurisdiction of those power holders by means of repeated public displays of that population's numbers, commitment, unity and worthiness" (p.7). It is clear from the different definitions that a social movement is distinguishable when a group from the population, with no political affiliation, collectively stand up to powerholders, through different means of collective actions in order to see a certain claim or demand met, to see change. They come into being when people become aggrieved by an event, a political decision or social injustice, and so they mobilize and stand up to the political forces. As regular citizens, it is their way to seize the political opportunity (Klandermans, 2004). Besides being a contributor to societal change, social movements provide people with a sense of identity and belonging and it give meaning to one's life (*ibid.*). Virtually all the pleasures we as humans gain in our social lives can be found in social movements: it gives you a community and ongoing companionship and bonds with others, along with a variety of challenges, conversations, cooperation, and competitions. It gives us meaning to fight for some social or political change together with people we identify with (Klandermans, 2004., Della Porta & Diani, 2006). These different aspects: resources, opportunities, and grievances, along with identity, meaning and participation, are fundamental

in order to understand why social movements come into being and why people join them (Klandermans, 2004).

Although these components are comprehensible in black and white, in reality it is not as clear. When social movements are discussed, they appear to be concrete, tangible phenomena when in actuality they are rather unclear and vague. The factors just named that are seen as essentials to the formation of a social movement are in themselves hard to define. To declare something a social movement require a number of different factors to coexist and to be sustained over a period of time, and this is hard to decipher. And even when a social movement is actualized, the organisational structures of them often lack a clear shape, again, making it complicated to pinpoint what is actually happening. This is a reason why most of the established studies on social movements are conducted long after the actual movement took place.

Making these distinctions is even more difficult today when social media has become a key forum for activism and mobilization. Given its interactive nature, social media lowers the barriers for social exchanges and so, it has become an effective tool for staying updated and getting involved in current society issues, making participatory culture the norm on social media (Hwang & Kim, 2015). When it comes to social movement activities, social media facilitates interaction between people who share similar ideas and promotes sharing common interests. It provides the space for communities to debate certain issues while also providing a useful tool for mobilization. Traditional mobilization requires individuals to combine resources to establish collective power through organizations but with social media, the diverse voices can easily be collectivized and broadcast to the society. Not only is it an effective method for spreading information but it can also facilitate in the mobilization of necessary resources for activities outside of the online forum (*ibid.*). Some pivotal events in the past few years have shown just what social media can do. Thousands of women posted the words #metoo on their social media platforms to show just how common sexual abuse is which led to a movement devoted to put a stop to it. This led to multiple shifts in legislations to tighten the law against sexual abusers, among other things. When the videos of George Floyd being suffocated to death by a police officer spread at breakneck speed, people all over the world started demonstrating and showing solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Social media has also impacted the means for collective action. Here in Sweden the organisation Black Lives Matter Sweden encouraged people to log onto Facebook on the same day and at the same time and check-in to the US Embassy in Sweden, publish the

demonstrative picture provided by the organisation and add the hashtag #BlackLivesMatterSweden to show our solidarity with the movement. A simple act that does not require much effort but that makes a big statement. This new mean for rapid information spreading along with the instant accessibility to that information gives new meaning and new life to the iconic phrase ‘the whole world is watching’ (Gardner, 2013).

The question with these types of social media activism events is if they are simply isolated phenomena sparked by an event, or if they have the potential to grow into something bigger? In March of 2021 our feeds were flooded with news that a woman, Sarah Everard, had disappeared in London and had been reported missing after simply walking home from a friend. In the years since the #metoo fall of 2017 the subject of women’s safety has continuously been a pressing topic of discussion and so this case caught everybody’s attention. A couple of days after the news broke out new headlines emerged informing that a dead body had been found, and shortly after that it was confirmed that the body was Sarah Everards. Not only was the fact that a woman had been kidnapped and murdered on the way home from a friend enough to reignite the fight for women’s safety in the streets, the piece of information that pushed this issue over the edge was the fact that the prime suspect was a police officer, a person sworn to protect and serve. Later, when people came together to pay their respects at a vigil organised in her honour, police were recorded using excessive force on women by pinning them to the ground and dragging them off the scene. When the world learned that Sarah Everard was murdered by a policeman when simply walking home, and later saw how police treated the people who attended the vigil, people took to social media to express their grievances regarding the fact that women still need to feel scared and unsafe in everyday circumstances and their outrage about police conduct in all of this. This grew to a scale to where media started referring to the collective online activities as a movement (Porterfield, 2021; Gariano, 2021; Specia, 2021). Even though this is a very recent event with the discussion still very current, I want to explore if there is potential for this to grow into a social movement by using the literature on social movements as template and a collection of tweets as data. I want to find out if there is some underlying activism behind the vast number of tweets linked to this case and the events that follow. With that, my research question is as follows:

- Can this collective online phenomenon be part of a social movement?

By following the events both on the news, in the media and on social media, and seeing the growth of support and followers this cause has obtained over a short period of time it is hard to deny that there is something there that suggest the foundation to something that can grow into a social movement. Traditional movements required more planning and organising and it took time in order to mobilize and take to the streets to get their message across. With social media these steps can be done in just a click and ultimately get the same attention as a rally or a march. While social media creates opportunities for activists to spread their message quickly and opens up a new forum for protesters to mobilize and create new forms of activism events, the fast-pacing nature of social media puts a question to the solidity of online movements and if it stands to exceed into the ‘real world’. While the initial impact may be big, if the momentum is not maintained and built on with more events it runs the risk of dying out.

With the case surrounding Sarah Everard there has been activity both on social media and it has been taken to streets. The chain of events following her disappearance and the vigil has given the discussion a sense of sustainability and longevity because the problem resurfaced again and again, sparking new conversations each time with references to the events that passed. Because of these factors I believe that there can be something to this that has potential to grow into an organised campaign. Even though some of the characteristics we might associate to social movements are perceived in this case, so much that the media named it a movement, the nature of social media blurs the definitions and so it needs some investigating and the help from the substantive literature and previous studies done on social movements to clarify what is really going on. Because social media has become a powerful tool when it comes to collective behaviour and calling out social injustices, doing this study will give some clarification to what is going on behind a so-called online movement. This will also give some deeper insight about the foundation of social movements, especially movements that start online, which is becoming a bigger and lasting phenomenon.

To best provide the answer to this question I have first presented the main criteria and over all dynamics that a number of previous studies and the social movement literature have determined to be the building blocks to successful and established social movements.

Following that, the presentation of the data has been divided into categories based on thematic similarities in their content, to give a sense of what the main topics of discussions are and who/what they are aimed at. Lastly for the discussion and conclusion, the criteria presented in the initial chapters has been used as the yardstick to determine what presented in the data can make this a potential movement and what is missing and in need of further efforts.

## **2. Case description**

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, 33-year-old Sarah Everard left a friend's house at 9pm to walk home. During what would have been a 50-minute trip, on a wide and heavily trafficked road, Sarah spoke with her boyfriend over the phone for 15 minutes, agreeing to meet the next day. March 4<sup>th</sup>, when Sarah did not show up her boyfriend reported her missing. In the days that followed police searched parklands, surveyed footage, and spoke to more than 750 people in search for evidence. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, remains of a dead body were found and on March 12<sup>th</sup> it was confirmed that it was Sarah Everard. Later a Met police officer was arrested and charged for her murder ("Murder of Sarah Everard", 2021).

Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, nation-wide vigils were organised by a group named Reclaim These Streets, to allow people to grieve and pay respects to Sarah, and to stand up against violence against women. Due to the covid pandemic and the nationwide law banning mass gatherings, the police announced that the vigil would be an illegal event and asked that people stay home and instead find a lawful and safe way to express their views and pay their respects, forcing Reclaim These Streets to cancel the event. The organisation then started a dialog with the police in order to see what they could do in order to go through with the event in accordance with the covid regulation, with the argument that the people always have the right to protest. The case went to court but they never got an answer whether the vigil would be permitted or not. However, the police still decided to ban the vigil. This gained extra attention due to the bill that the government put forward at around the same time, proposing giving police more power when it comes to protests. This would for instance allow police to impose conditions like outright bans on protests if their action cause "serious annoyance" on the public. This sparked the so called Kill the Bill protests (Casciani, 2021; Chao-Fong, 2021).

Despite the ban, hundreds of people attended the vigil at Clapham Common. After the discussions with the police, another action group, Sisters Uncut, got involved, telling people to attend "with your sadness and your rage". They also spoke at the vigil. The police were told to break up the big crowd that showed up to the vigil and footage showed that police used force, manhandled the crowd, and pinned women to the ground. Four people were arrested for public-order offences and for breaching the Coronavirus Act 2020. The police commissioner later announced that the police acted appropriately. This caused a new wave of outrage online, which left people with a distrust in police and government ("Murder of Sarah Everard", 2021; Casciani, 2021). This thesis aims at a discussion whether these events; the public grievances

and calls for action happening both online and in the real world can be classified as the start of a social movement.

### **3. Theory and background**

The study of social movements started its ascend to becoming a major area of research in the 1960s, when populations all over the world started demanding social changes and were taking collective actions to see their demands met. Groups like the civil rights and anti-war movements in America, students' protests in Germany, Britain, and Mexico, and the growing women's and environmental movements, to name a few, sparked a growing interest in research into collective action, and by the mid-1970s it was considered one of the most thriving areas of sociology (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Today, the study of social movements is solidly established. Rather than being ground-breaking phenomena, social movements, protest actions and political unalignment have become a permanent component in our modern society. Given its five-century tradition there is lot that can be said about social movements. Moving forward I will focus on what can be considered the criteria for a social movement according to the new social movement perspective. I will present what I have ruled to be the key characteristics to social movements based on the common traits that I have drawn from the social movement literature. These characteristics will be key to this study in order to determine what in the data suggests that this case could be part of a social movement. When it comes to these key characteristics there are a number of common conclusions that can be found in the literature regarding what it is that defines a social movement. A good starting point to summarizing this is Mario Diani's definition. In a number of his works, he explains that:

*“Social movements are a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked by dense informal networks [and] share a distinct collective identity.” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006., p 20)*

To break it down, a social movement is a process in which actors engage in conflictual *collective action* to promote or oppose social change. For this to be actualized, there needs to be a clear opponent. There needs to be a strong us vs. them feeling which is established through a clear *collective identity*. There needs to be some *longevity* to the campaigns, meaning the process needs to go beyond a single event, and there needs to be a level of *social*

*movement organisation* (Della Porta & Diani, 2006., Oliver 2013., van Stekelenburg, 2013., McCarthy, 2013). Other than the four key characteristics that define established social movements there are also some dynamics that are common in the development of social movement but are not necessarily considered defining traits. Factors like mobilization and coalition formation are often involved in the social movement process but are not the defining factors, rather they are factors important to setting the foundation for the social movement process. The formation of a social movement is a process in which a build-up of different protest events solidifies and become integrated in a routine for a specific group of people. Each factor depends and thrive on the next and it is when it all comes together that we can distinguish a social movement from, say, an organisational gathering or a demonstration.

## **2.1 Collective action**

At its core collective action simply means what the words imply; anything people do together with other people (Oliver, 2013). What distinguishes collective action from collective behaviour, another term that can be seen in social movement studies and has the same implication is that collective action requires conscious planning. In research collective behaviour is looked at as behaviour emerging spontaneously in crowds, whereas collective action has been more associated with social movement due to its emphasis on the purposive and goal-oriented nature in the behaviour. Studying collective action is looking into how people come together and act for a common purpose (Oliver, 2013). Collective action in social movements ranges from protests and riots to peaceful marches and demonstrations, and from holding meetings and press conferences to spreading protest messages through social media. The key to these sorts of actions lies in mobilization; the process where the networks and organisations within the movements transform potential for action into real action (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). The consciousness in taking a plan and turning it into action is what distinguishes collective action from the randomly emerging collective behaviour. The importance for sustaining the social movement process is for this episode of collective action to not be an isolated event. There is social movement dynamic when single episodes of collective action are perceived as a component of a longer-lasting commitment, and that there are more actions to come (Della Porta & Diani, 2003). When people feel passionate about a cause and the goal they are working for, they are more likely to engage in events related to that cause and are also more willing to act on behalf of it. Even more so when they feel a sense of identity with that community, as I will account for in the next chapter. But the importance of a goal is not enough for a person to continuously commit to something, there

needs to be some likelihood for success (Klandermans, 2004). What is tricky about collective action is that it is difficult to know to what extent an activity will have an effect on authority. According to Charles Tilly, one of the most influential social movement scholars, for a protest event or a social movement campaign to generate the most impact it needs to display worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment – WUNC. It simply means that the more a protest event have a high turnout of people (numbers) and attract crowds that appear unified (unity), and dignified (worthiness), and who really care about a certain issue (commitment), the more likely they will produce a wanted outcome (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017). When the collective act displays these characteristics, it conveys the message that the protestors are serious claimants who legitimately can speak on behalf of a segment of the population.

Not only is WUNC an element that contribute to the effectiveness of collective action, according to Tilly it is also key for the success of social movements as a whole. He states that a social movement becomes just that when it combines a repertoire of events, that display WUNCness, within the frames of a certain claim (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017). While each element can exist in of itself, it is the unique combination that creates the distinct social movement. WUNCs contribution is that all four components increase the plausibility that the movement has the weight it needs to make an impact, and that it is willing to use that weight to disrupt the existing climate (ibid.).

One type of collective action that is in many ways the most important to social movements is activism. As Diani explained it, social movements grow from and operate because of a conflictual relationship with an opposing party. Here is why activism plays a big part in social movements. Shortly defined, activism is the action where movements challenge some existing elements in the social or political system in order to fulfil their aims (Saunders, 2013).

Activism comes in many different forms and with different levels of risk. Scholars have distinguished between five different types of activism; conventional activism, which entails affiliating yourself with a political party; demonstrative activism, meaning participating in rallies and marches; confrontational activism, which include sit-ins and blockades; property damage, which includes sabotage to protect the environment, and violent activism which involves violence toward another human being (Saunders, 2013). An additional and equally compelling distinction is the one between high risk and cost activism and low risk and cost activism. This shows that some actions anticipate danger or personal injury, and requires a lot of time and resources, versus actions that aren't as dangerous or time costly (ibid.).

Lastly, when it comes to activism it is important to note that just because a group of people

engage in an act of activism it does not automatically make them a social movement. However, a social movement isn't a social movement without acts of activism.

## 2.2 Collective identity

As mentioned, isolated protest events regarding a certain issue does not make a social movement. A social movement is in process when a collective identity is developed which goes beyond specific events (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Collective identity is simply defined as “the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, values and solidarity”, and is distinguishable as the group’s symbols, rituals, and the beliefs and values shared by its members (van Stekelenburg, 2013., p.1). Collective identity is crucial for the emergence of social movements because it brings a sense of common purpose and a shared commitment to a cause, and the more people feel connected to a group, the more they are inclined to act on behalf of that group (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; van Stekelenburg, 2013). Identity means understanding who you are and who other people are. However, collective identity is not simply a set of cognitions collectively internalized by a group. It is a process that goes beyond our individual perceptions. It is a practical accomplishment - the process of identifying with other people is about meaning, and meaning is about interaction (van Stekelenburg, 2013) Collective identity can be seen as a project and is something that is constantly under construction, and the groups collective actions are what shape the identity (*ibid.*). Group identity becomes salient when the members of the group start to self-identify themselves as a “we” instead of “I”. One factor that strongly reminds people of their group identity and thus solidifies bond is rivalry and conflict between groups (van Stekelenburg, 2013). When there is cleavage in society, groups are forced to get organized and identities formed under such circumstances are considered organized identities. These are more likely to mobilize than unorganized identities and thus, making it more likely for the identity to solidify. Forcing to organise means structured and conscious actions that in turn makes it more likely that group intention materializes. These intentions are founded on who “we” are, what “we” are prepared to fight for, and most importantly how “we” are prepared to act (van Stekelenburg, 2013).

Another factor that strengthens group identity and shapes the emergence of collective action is identifying who is and who isn't part of the network: establishing an out-group (van Stekelenburg, 2013., Della Porta & Diani, 2006). A collective group identity grows from loose networks made up of the mutual recognition of individuals who devote their time towards a specific cause. This makes commitment to the group unstable and so defining

boundaries – i.e., who is and who is not part of that group – help shape the identity further (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

This shows that not only are collective action and collective identity fundamental for social movements, but they are also interdependent. Collective action is dependent on one seeing themselves as part of a group but acting collectively requires collective identity. As stated previously, the sense of unity is detrimental for a movement to take form, and unity is not something that can be directly observed but it occurs internally with the protesters and are often displayed through collective performances like wearing matching uniforms or badges or perform a coordinated choreography or chants same slogans. In sum, people need to feel unity – identify – with a specific group of people before they are willing to act on behalf of that group (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017).

### **2.3 Social movement organisation and coalition**

The traditional approach to understanding the emergence of social movements was to look at the intentions and actions of aggrieved individuals. However, these aggrieved individuals rarely spontaneously come together to protest a specific issue. Analysts of social movements began to focus more on the organising forces behind the mobilizing of social movement activities. Social movement organisation (SMO) seeks to mobilize the diverse range of resources found within social movements, both material and human and can be defined as “a complex or formal organisation which identifies its preferences with a social movement [...] and attempts to implement those goals” (McCarthy, 2013, p.1). When movements commit their efforts to go beyond a single event, and have established networks of adherents and activists, a form of organisation is bound to develop. At a minimum a mailing list, a name for the movement, and a couple of people in charge of managing that mailing list. SMOs are there to manage the interdependencies of the adherents and participants who are committed to the movement and help make sure that the efforts to reach the common goals are reached by continuing mobilizing and protesting.

The common image of a social movement leads to the conception that SMOs are composed primarily of individual members committed to the movement, when in actuality a large proportion of them include organisations as well (McCarthy, 2013). Virtually all social movements involve organisations who work together and share resources to achieve a specific goal. This is referred to as a coalition (Van Dyke, 2013., Della Porta & Diani, 2006). In a coalition dynamic the actors are connected to each other in terms of an alliance who identify

an explicit opponent, and these are important for social movements and social movement mobilization. For a coalition to be formed, organisations need to share some common goal, consistent identities, and similar ideology in order for them to collaborate (Van Dyke, 2013). Not only do collaboration with other organisations facilitate in attaining resources, expansion in personnel and help in mobilizing, research have shown that having ties to other activist and their organisations is one of the strongest predictors of protest participation (*ibid.*). Social networks like these make it possible for the information to reach more people and thus increase the likelihood for larger participations. Taking it back to WUNC, by displaying large numbers, movements could successfully claim public authority. Numbers is probably the most straight forward component of WUNC – the more people protest, the larger the chances that the protesters represent a majoritarian part of the population (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017). We know that mobilization requires organisation and resources, and that organisation also provides one of the surest ways to participation. Coalition formation is a sure way to attain all of this. It is therefore hard to argue against the fact that organisational coalition plays an important role in social mobilisation and thus, for the formation of social movements (Van Dyke, 2013).

All of these factors are only relevant if there is a cause to stand behind. Other factors in social movement campaigns that are subject to research are how the demands of the protesting group are framed, and in what way they publicly stage these demands. This is referred to as claims-making and it is the process of performing claims that bear on someone else's interests (Lindeskilde, 2013). In the social movement process, claims making is seen as a performance consisting of two parts; the *formulation of a demand* which revolves around specific content and a *public staging of this demand*. To get the claims making mediated – whether it be mass media coverage of a demonstration or giving interviews or issuing press releases – is getting more and more essential to social movements today in order for them to make their cause visible. The concept of claims making comes with a degree of semantic overlap with other core social movement concepts like collective action and framing. Within social movements, framing is the process in which actors and followers engage in meaning construction relevant to the movement and their set goals. Basically, it problematizes the meaning associated with certain events or actors, suggesting that those meanings are negotiable and open to a different interpretation (Snow, 2013). Specific to the social movement are *collective action frames*. These are the result of a coherent set of action-oriented beliefs that inspire and legitimate social movement campaigns. It is about articulating

and elaborating some specific elements within the frame so that a particular meaning is conveyed so that the existing meaning attached to the object, event, individual etc. is seen in a way different than before (Snow, 2013). Frames carry three core functions for social movements. First, they focus attention on what is relevant – what is “in-frame” vs. “out-of-frame”. Second, they tie together the focal elements in the scene to make sure that one set of meanings is conveyed, rather than another. And third, already mentioned, frames often perform a transformative function and reconstitute the way some objects are understood or seen (Snow, 2013). Sometime the frames that emerge early within a movement, and that haven’t been worked on and articulated fully, serve as a *master frame* that goes on to colour and constrain the orientations and actions of the movement, and other movement that emerges within the same cycle.

When it comes to the social movement process there are a lot of components that need to come together for a social movement to take shape. Each of the components presented in this chapter can all occur independently in different contexts and in different causes and occasions. But it is when they are all established within the same campaign and over a period of time that it can be called a social movement.

#### **4. Previous studies**

Up until a couple of years ago studies on social movements and the extensive knowledge obtained from these studies were based on social movements that were active only on the streets and in the real world. But with the emergence of social media more and more studies are exploring and showing how social media has become a powerful and useful tool in different aspects of social movement process. The high connectedness and enhanced dissemination of information allow the activists and adherents to efficiently communicate and mobilize, which accounts to some of the reasons why social movement organisers and followers have shifted to the online sphere (Afnan et al., 2019; Brünker et al., 2020). Because social media plays a key role in this study, instead of presenting what studies contributed to the determining factors that characterizes the traditional offline social movements I will present studies that highlight how social media has been utilized and what impact it has had on the social movement process. More and more studies are acknowledging and exploring how social media has influenced how social movements are organised and performed because more and more activists turn to social media in order to start a process that will hopefully lead

to a change in society. Several aspects of our personal social life have expanded and taken new forms with the introduction of social media and its new possibilities and connectedness, and social movements are no exception. Different social medias provide different features and each have their own trademark characteristic. With the many factors that go into a social movement, each social media can serve a different function for the different steps in the process. Because of that I will present three different studies that look into social medias use for social movement, along with their knowledge on the topic. Three different studies on three different platforms investigating three different angles of social media use and its pros and cons to social movements. Starting with a more general study about social media and if it has an effect on peoples intentions to join social movements.

### **3.1 Social media and social movements**

In a study from 2015, Hwang and Kim wanted to investigate whether social media has an effect on social movement participation and if so, how social media use influences the intention to participate. They also looked into what role social capital play in this new dynamic. Presenting their background for the study step by step starting with their presentation of the platform, they explain that social media is a forum that advocate for interactivity and interpersonal contact, and that allows its users to create, share and discuss user-generated content. It is for people to connect and interact with both their friends as well as other social media users. Being an internet base communication platform, social media differs from traditional media in that the information delivered on traditional media is unidirectional while information on social media involve cooperative and interactive communication and can easily be shared.

When it comes to social movements and social media, they present that there are two ways in which social media can efficiate social movements. First, social movements can use social media to convey their message to a broad audience and second, social media empowers users to generate messages that urges new activations. Social movement may also promote participation from those who have typically been left out of public engagement. However, although social media facilitates the participation in social movement, making it easier than ever to get engage – all it takes is clicking a button, these same people might be less motivated to participate in more effortful activities. Critics point out that due to the low effort required in the participatory actions some people may join movements without substantial commitment and that this form of ‘keyboard activism’ may replace real actions. While the risk of low commitment is a factor when it comes to real world actions, social media does also

allow people who have low commitment to the traditional social movements a chance to easily join in. It is an efficient tool when it comes to attracting a large number of people to a cause (Hwang & Kim, 2015).

Social media allows for a broad network, although made up of mostly weak tied relationships, which in the case for social mobilization is not a negative feature. Social capital increases commitment to the networked relationships and the ability to mobilize people to collective action and bridging social capital based on weak ties is an asset to social movements because it allows for expanded mobility potential (Hwang & Kim, 2015). To tie the aspects together: in terms of social media's incorporation into social movements bridging social capital can play an important role because internet based weak ties gives the advantage to attract large numbers of people quickly and easily. Based on this background knowledge they established four research questions:

- How do the respondents use traditional media, the internet and social media?
- How is social media use related to social movement participation?
- How does the level of social capital differ in accordance to the social media usage?
- How does social media use and social capital affect the intent to participate in social movements?

To answer these questions, Hwang and Kim analysed data from the *Korean Youth and Children Integrated Survey*, a survey that is conducted annually since 2009. 2012 however was the first year the research theme 'social media usage of youth' was investigated. 2302 young adults were sampled and the social media platform in focus was Facebook. It is the most widely used social media platform which both provides networking services as well as promotes the creating and sharing of user generated content (Hwang & Kim, 2015). To analyse the data, they applied a number of quantitative measures which are accounted in detail in the original study (p.482).

So, what did they find out? According to the media use patterns they identified, those who depend on and use social media more had higher levels of both intentions to participate and actual participation in social movements. They also found that heavy social media users had

the highest scores for both bonding and bridging social capital and that these same people also had higher levels of both intentions to participate and actual participatory practices.

*“It means that the intention to participate in social movements tends to be higher not just with higher social media usage but with higher level of bridging social capital, and the latter is more important, as this implies more diverse resources for the user to refer”*

(Hwang & Kim, 2015., p. 486). In summation, results from their study suggests that social media is an effective tool to social movements for those who have a well-constructed network. Social movement participation will increase if an individual has a network that includes those who are more likely to participate in social movements and if they have broader bridging social capital. Their results show how the use of social media influences the intentions to participate in social movements, and it is safe to suggest that social media play an important role in improving said intentions.

While the use of social media helps social movements increase participation it raises a discussion about a potential participation gap between social media user and non-users. Peoples previous attitudes and behaviour towards media get integrated into this new wave of social media and social movements, which runs the risk of maintaining or even widening the gap (Hwang & Kim, 2015).

### **3.2 “Putting a price on social movements”**

Moving to a new social media platform, and a new aspect to social media and social movements, Afnan et al. conducted a study looking at how hashtag activism may increase the risk for users with commercial interests to commodify social movements on Instagram (2020). As social media platforms grow in popularity, people find new ways to utilize them and so far, the existing literature has focused mainly on how social media enhances and helps social movements. There are no previous studies on how social media users may commodify social movements (Afnan et al., 2019). When the topic of online social movements is brought to discussion, the practice that most probably comes to mind is hashtag activism. Hashtag activism allows people to spread messages or show support for a specific cause while posting on social media by using a hashtag specifically coined for that movement (Afnan et al., 2019). While practicing hashtag activism allows for extraordinary speed and reach when it comes to spreading a message, Afnan et al. points out that the virtual spaces in which this activism

exists may not always be neutral (2020). Since the platforms themselves are owned by private companies with commercial interests, it is inevitably that social media platforms create virtual environments directed to commodification making the social movements led by hashtag activism open to possible commodification (Afnan et al., 2019).

To look into this possible problem, Afnan et al. chose one of the most popular social movements and one that grew through hashtag activism: the #metoo movement. They investigated how #metoo posts and hashtags are utilized on Instagram and if there are commodified posts related to the movement. They sought out to answer four research questions:

- What do users share by using hashtags related to the #metoo movement on Instagram?
- If commodified posts exist, what are the differences between commodified and non-commodified posts?
- Are potential commodified posts relevant to #metoo movement?
- Do different strategies of commodification exist among users on Instagram?

Instagram is a platform that launched in 2010 and differs from other social media platform in that it was developed to be used on smartphones and has limited functionality in a web browser. It is an image-sharing application with features that allows its users to modify and edit the images before posting them (Afnan et al., 2019). To collect data, they began by searching and identifying popular hashtags associated with the movement on Instagram. Based on their frequency of use and their relatedness to the movement the hashtags selected was #metoo, #metoostory, #metoomovement and #metoomvnmt. The datasets for each hashtag were then collected through a text and social network analysing program called Netlytic and to narrow the sample, a random sample selection formula was used on Excel which resulted in a total sample size of 200. The data was then analysed through a qualitative approach inspired by grounded theory methodologies (Afnan et al., 2019).

Results showed that when it comes to the posts users share on Instagram using hashtags related to the #metoo movement 19 percent of the posts were related to a commodity, and 63 percent of these commodified posts were relevant to the movement. And when it comes to the difference between commodities and non-commodified post there was no significant

difference. Among the commodified posts two major strategies were identified: image-based and caption-based strategies, and they in turn were expressed in different ways. In the image-based strategy where the image in the post is the primary mean for product communication, users took either a direct or an indirect approach to display their products. In the direct approach, very little information is given in the caption under the image other than information that further guides the observer of where they can purchase the product. The image speaks for itself. In the indirect approach the example that is illustrated shows that is not clear from neither the image nor caption whether it is a commercial post. It is not until you click on the image's profile page that it was clear that the image depicts a product that can be purchased. In this case it was an illustration of Oprah Winfrey than could be purchased as a pin, and the caption only included a quote related to the Time's up movement. The caption-based on the other hand relies on the textual component of the post and three primary approached were identified in these posts: hashtag only captions where no other information was given besides the hashtags (74 percent), sharing a personal story that ties to the product (16 percent) and providing advice to others which ultimately also ties to the product (11 percent).

This study highlights how the use of social media expands with the growth and popularity of the different platforms. Since social media is becoming the new arena for many emerging social movements it is becoming essential to understand how and if the different ways in which the current theoretical framework on offline movements can explain online movements (Afnan et al., 2019). And while majority of the prior research shows that social media facilitates social movements like contributing to the practice of hashtag activism, this study shows that the use of hashtags is a “double-edged sword that affords users with commercial interests a new outlet” (*ibid.*, p. 7). This opens up for further research. This is a case specific study so there is more to learn about other hashtag heavy platforms and how social movements operationalize within them. The platform as well, Instagram, with its unique functions may exhibit different tendencies when looking at other social movements.

### **3.3 The role of social media**

The final study I am presenting is by Brünker et al. (2020) that looks into yet another aspect of how social media is incorporated in social movements. They wanted to look into what role social media play during a social movement by investigating who the influential users are and how they communicated. They claim that in order to broaden the understanding of social movement on social media, we need to form an understanding of the dynamics of

communications among the distinct groups that are active on social media and that are part of a social movement active there (Brünker et al., 2020). So, they investigated which kind of roles were involved in sharing and publishing tweets related to #metoo, along with what content these users shared on Twitter during a two-month period. Their research question was as follows:

- How do influential roles participate over the course of an online social movement on Twitter?

The first step towards answering the research question was to collect tweets by relevant keywords. They then conducted a social network analysis to identify influential users participating in the #metoo debate, followed by a comprehensive content analysis to classify the identified users into role and to categorize the tweets into explicit content categories. Their expectations for the findings were that the different roles differed in their sharing behaviour and consequently influenced the discussion in different ways.

As briefly mentioned, Brünker et al. collected tweets regarding the #metoo debate in 2017 from the social media platform Twitter. The tweets spanned over a two-month period from September 2017 to November 2017. Twitter was chosen because it has been proven to be a substantial tool for information exchange during social movements. Mostly due to Twitters retweet function which allows for real-time interaction (Brünker et al., 2020). In the end they examined the content published by the top 200 power users and which information of the #metoo tweets were the most retweeted. Results showed that 12 different roles were identified in the data: Journalist, Private person, Media organisation, Activist, Celebrity, Politician, Social bot, NGO, International organisation, Company, Governmental organisation, and Suspended account. Out of the 12 Journalist, Private person and Media organisation were pointed out as the most influential roles during the #metoo debate, which is in line to the results from studies examining other social movements (Brünker et al., 2020). But a stand-out is that the role of Celebrity differed from these findings. Here, the user role of Celebrity was more influential than Media organisation. This can be explained with the origin of the #metoo debate which was initiated by a celebrity (*ibid.*). Regarding the content that is being shared, the results revealed underlying differences between roles. Journalists appeared to behave similarly to Private persons in that they both shared a lot of personal content in form of opinions and testimonies. They were also similar in their high use of hashtags and @mentions. This also complements the previous research which found that journalists often

use personal messages with the intent to form a relationship to their audience in order to build their brand (Brünker et al., 2020). Celebrities on the other hand contributed mostly with testimonies and calls for action, which also aligns with previous studies which found that celebrities play an important role in social media driven movements, namely, to gather attention to it (Brünker et al., 2020). When it comes to the general content categories, “sharing personal content” was by far the most retweeted, followed by “references” and “call to action”. In sum the results point to different motives when it comes to sharing on Twitter, from self-serving and brand building, to calling for attention and action towards the cause of sexual harassment, and that there are different roles who all contributed to the spreading of #metoo in different ways. This study contributes to the further knowledge of identifying which influential roles are active during a social movement that mainly evolved online.

Three different studies, all set out to increase our understanding of how social media contributes and adds potential or drawbacks for social movements. Social media continues to grow, and with it grows the ways in which we can use them. Although social media have fairly recently become a tool for social movements, people are already expanding its uses for it. And now the research is starting to catch up to them as well. But as each of the authors states, there is still much knowledge left to gain on this topic.

## 5. Method

In order to answer the research question in the best way a qualitative method will be applied. I conducted a content analysis, using both computer-aided text analysis (CATA) and human coding in a complementary fashion in order to get the most out of the data (Skalski, Neuendorf & Cajigas, 2017). Content analysis is generally defined as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts [...] to the contexts of their use. These inferences may address the message itself, the sender(s) of the message, the recipients of the message or the impact of the message” (Krippendorff, 2013; Weber, 1984., as cited in Drisko & Maschi, 2015., p.2). This definition entails that content analysis can go beyond paying attention only to the manifest content, meaning only looking at what is overtly and literally present in a communication (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Drisko and Maschi (2015) present three different approaches to content analysis: basic content analysis, interpretive content analysis and qualitative content analysis. For this study I conducted an interpretive content analysis. What differs between basic and interpretive content analysis is that the basic

content analysis uses mainly quantitative analytic techniques that predominantly look at the literal communication content. Importance in the content is determined by frequency of words, whereas interpretive content analysis addresses the sources and receivers of the message. Because of its interpretive view of analysing both manifest and latent content – meaning the symbolism underlying the literal data – can be considered in the analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). No matter the approach to content analysis, it requires a defined and transparently reported description of how the data was collected, coded, and analysed. This will be reported below.

The CATA was conducted with the help of a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called NVivo. The CAQDAS is used in the initial steps of the data analysis to facilitate in the data collecting and with processing the data. CAQDAS has shown to be particularly useful when working with larger amounts of data (Atherton & Elsmore, 2007) and is a good tool when it comes to social media content. For this study data was sampled from Twitter. Since this is a qualitative study, it needs to accurately be a reflection and a representation of the world from which the data was taken from, as well as offer an insight into that world (*ibid.*). Thus, a bigger sample of data will be used for the analysis. CAQDAS are helpful in working with the data in a more ordered and less time-consuming way but there are downsides that should be avoided. When working with big data, meaning data sets that are too voluminous for traditional analytical methods (Skalski, Neuendorf & Cajigas, 2017) CATA and CAQDAS helps in manipulating the data and overcome the traditional coding limitations. However, by definition big data implies that it is too complicated to be handled by humans, therefore you can only rely on computer power to analyse making the data completely removed from human experience (*ibid.*). To not completely rely on CATA in this study I collected a sample of data that I felt not too big to implement traditional coding techniques and thus, implementing a more hybrid approach to the analyses. This will “preserve the strengths of traditional content analyses, with its systematic rigor and contextual awareness, while maximizing the large-scale capacity of big data and the efficiencies of computational methods” (Skalski, Neuendorf & Cajigas, 2017., p. 4). Programs like NVivo requires the researcher to have a pre-determined process for how to order, categorise and code the data, which gives the researcher a more hands-on role when it comes to working with the data. It is a process of first ‘dis-assembling’ the data by using the software’s application, making the complex information more tangible, and then re-assembling it through manual coding made by the researcher. This takes away from the

neutrality and objectiveness of solely relying on the software (Atherton & Elsmore, 2007). My data analysis was done in three steps. The first two was aided by the software and in the final step I coded the findings manually. With a big data set like this, I decided to start the transformation of the data by letting NVivo do a thematic mapping of the data set to see what co-occurrences there are. A software like NVivo does this by identifying keywords based on ‘keyness’. This is defined as “a quality possessed by words, word-clusters, phrases etc., a quality which is not language-dependent but text-dependent” (Scott, 2008 as cited in W.M & Lai, 2015). The thematic mapping was done in two stages; first the structural information in the data was summarized and secondly an exploratory analysis was made of the content to distinguish themes based on frequent keywords. These analyses only look at the manifest content, the similarities that occur in the text, so the third step was to look at the latent content and to analyse the whole, and the intention behind the communication (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). These three steps, as well as all the methodological phases – the data collection, more information about the data transformation and interpretations of the findings (W.M & Lai, 2015) – will be described with in more detail in the upcoming chapters.

## 6. Analysis

To get a fitting data sample, I started by conducting a twitter search in order to filter out the tweets specifically mentioning Sarah Everard and the events that took place in London. Twitter’s search engine allows you to conduct an advanced search, which then allows you to really narrow down and specify your search. The search can narrow down what exact words, sentences, or hashtags the tweet should include, which account sent the tweet, who is mentioned or who the tweet is sent to, how many replies, links, and retweets it has, what language the tweet should be in and during which time span the tweet was posted. For this study I narrowed the search to contain the words ‘Sarah’ and ‘Everard’, to be written in English, and to have been posted within the span March 4<sup>th</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup> – the day after Sarah Everard disappeared and one month forward. The search also included links, retweets and replies. Including these will help in determining whether there are any opinion leaders among the twitter users, given how many retweets they have. The links would show what specific topic (i.e current event, news article, tv interview) is at the centre of discussion, or what the author is focusing their tweet around.

After the search was completed, 9000 tweets with these criteria were sampled for an analysis.

NVivo's Ncapture function allowed me to directly extract the tweets from the twitter webpage and input them into NVivo as a complete dataset. When opened in NVivo, the tweets are presented in a table with each column of the table showing each tweet's ID, username and bio of the author, what time and from what location the tweet was posted, if it is an original tweet or a retweet, who retweeted it, how many times it has been retweeted and details about the author and their twitter account. Along with the table with detailed information, NVivo also presents the data in a bar chart. Without having done any analysis or having manipulated the data in any way, the bar chart will show the number of references present in the dataset on whatever variable you choose you put on the x-axis. For this study I focused on what username i.e., what author has the most references as well as from what location the tweet was sent. This will show the number of retweets a certain tweet has, and thus if there is an opinion leader in the group and from where in the world the most tweets are sent and thus, where the issue is the most topical.

In order to get a closer and more structured look at the data set and at what the numbers in the chart represented, I used NVivo's auto code option and started with coding the data set by style and structure. The data set itself is structured with separate columns for each value, however the order in which they are presented is mixed. This coding option will separate the different values and group the higher ones together. This will again show the most popular value in each category, but in a more elaborated way. This also allows further analyses to be made on each of the newly created codes. Moving on to the data itself; in order to get a sense of what the data says and to get an overview of the content of the tweets, I again started by using NVivo's auto code option on the full data set. Instead of asking NVivo to code by style and structure, I set the coding to identify themes in the data set. Since the tweets have a limited number of characters i.e., they cannot be longer than a certain number of words, I set the coding to look at the full paragraph of each tweet and assess the themes from that, rather than a single sentence. Taking the content of the tweets, NVivo will distinguish what each tweet says and divide them into separate categories again, ranking them from most popular theme to least mentioned themes. Since NVivo is a computer program, its auto coding and theme identification will be rather basic and straight forward, basing the coding on what words it sees are included in the tweet. Due to this, my final step in the analysis was a manual coding of the data. Although the auto coding's categorization makes the data more tangible and gives you a better overview, the sentiments of the tweets are completely overlooked, and not taken into consideration in the identifications of the themes. Reading through each tweet

within the themes that NVivo identified and separated the full data set into, I created new themes based on the nature and sentiment of the tweets. Doing this is key to this study because this would illustrate the intent behind sending the tweet, who it is intended for, what the point of view and the sentiment is (if it is threatening, encouraging, educational etc.). It will also make it easier to get a better look at who sent it and what their intentions could mean to the potential bigger issue. In addition to looking for possible influential people, I also kept an eye out for organisations involvement.

Due to the topicality of Sarah Everards murder at this time and with the ongoing discussions and events following it, a second data set was sampled from twitter. The same search method was applied on the twitter webpage as well as the same filtering criteria as the previous search, with the only exception being that the tweets were to be posted between April 4<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup>, ending the search on the day I conducted it. This generated roughly 6500 additional tweets and were extracted and inputted into NVivo in the same way, with Ncapture. When the data set was inputted into NVivo, the same steps were taken with the analyses as with the first set of tweets. First, auto code structured the information from the data set into separate categories. Secondly, auto coded themes were identified and lastly, I went through all the tweets and coded them again in order to get a better view of the nature, sentiments, and intentions behind the tweets. This data set was kept in a separate file in NVivo in order to easily separate the different timelines and to be able to make a direct comparison to see how and if the discussions and topics would evolve as time went on.

## 7. Results & Findings

To present the results in the clearest and most structured way I have divided this section into three. Each part will include the findings corresponding to each of the different analytical steps taken in NVivo, which are reported in the previous section. I will first reveal what information NVivo presented when the data set had been inputted, along with the results from the auto coded structural analysis. Second, I will present the outcome from the auto coded thematic analysis and in the final section, I will present the more detailed themes regarding sentiments and intent I found from my manual coding of the data set. This will be a report only on the findings themselves and what the outcome from the different analyses were. A more detailed report on the meanings of the findings will be found in the *Discussion* section. The findings from the two different data sets will be presented separately and commentary on

possible differences and developments in the data will also be presented in the *Discussion* section.

## 7.1 Data information and structural findings

When opening the chart in its default mode, looking at the number of references per username there is a clear standout and thus a clear opinion leader in the group. User ‘isaac\_ricca’s tweet:

*“Hi @metpoliceuk if Kate Middleton was lawfully at the Sarah Everard vigil because she was ‘working’, presumably you’ll shortly be confirming that the Legal Observers you arrested the next day were lawfully there too, meaning you are very sorry for detaining them?” (#158)*<sup>1</sup>

was references 1781 times in the data set, and a clear frontrunner for opinion leader compared to the second highest value of 484 references. Notably, when looking at this tweet in the original table with all the data information it shows that all in all, the tweet has been retweeted over 2000 times. The chart presents the references only in the extracted data set, and during the timeframe I initially set the search filter to.

When changing the variable on the x-axis to ‘location’ instead of ‘username’, the information got somewhat confusing. The location with the most references i.e., the spot where the most tweets were sent from was again isaac\_ricca (instagram -isaacricca – 1781 references).

Twitter offers you the option of tagging your tweet to a specific location, showing the readers where you were when the tweet was posted. In addition to using your phone’s automatic location setting and choosing the option closest to it in the twitter tags, you also have the option of adding your own location, if your specific spot is not available. Users tend to get creative with this, as with isaac\_ricca who made himself the location. Other tags of the same nature appeared in the data results such as ‘earth’ (30 references) and ‘at home, on my couch’ (66 references). Not taking these into account, the most referenced location is London, albeit in different versions. Adding up the references from the tagging options mentioning London (London 717 ref., London – England 347 ref., London/Birmingham 333 ref., London – UK 228 ref., Southwark, London 27 ref., London – United Kingdom 24 ref., London/Bucks/Dorset 21 ref. & London/Peckham 13 ref. respectively) it amounts to 1710 references of London in the total data set.

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<sup>1</sup> Datasets can be distributed on request

When completing the auto coding of the structural components in the data, the three most prominent categories are Tweet Type, Hashtag and Location. Looking first at the Location category it again showed that London is the most referenced location. Interestingly however, is that when the data set was analysed, albeit automatically by the program, it found 1814 references to London – 104 additional references than what was found in the initial mapping of the data set.

The Tweet Type category consists of only two subcategories: retweet and tweet, presenting how many of each the data consist of. Out of the 9000 tweets sampled, the vast majority of them are retweets, namely 7715. Only 1285 of the tweets in the sample are the original tweet, the rest are copies of that exact tweet, re-posted by another user. Most likely in agreement with the original statement, in pursue to keep the conversation going and the topic current. The Hashtag category lists all the hashtags that are included in the data set. It shows the hashtags in order from most referenced down to the hashtags with only a few references in the data. The four most popular hashtags in the data set are #CressidaDick (158 ref.) #Today (154 ref.) #SarahEverard (36 ref.) and #KillTheBill (33 ref.). Looking at some of the tweets that included these hashtags revealed that #CressidaDick and #Today prominently, but not exclusively came from the same tweet that had been retweeted several times:

*“Listening to #CressidaDick on #Today & I profoundly disagree with her. She should have allowed the vigil for Sarah Everard & worked with the organisers to police it safely. As soon as it was banned it was bound to attract other elements & descend into an unseemly PR disaster” (#383)*

When it come to the newer set of data, and the 6507 additional tweets accounted for in the data set the initial mapping of the users again show a clear opinion leader. A user that goes by 'davidlammy' has been referenced 2642 times in this data set, and thus his tweet:

*“Horrible. The government voted against putting serial stalkers and domestic abusers on a national register, despite briefing there were likely to support the measures following the death of Sarah Everards. You can’t trust @BorisJohnson.” (#1)*

has been retweeted an equal number of times. As for the Tweet Types in this data set the numbers are similar to the ones in the first data set. The majority of the tweets are retweets - 5759 retweets to 748 original tweets. And looking at the Locations category for this data set London is placed as the third most referenced location (276 ref.), Scotland, United Kingdom as the second (593 ref.) and the most referenced location is Tottenham (2642 ref.).

Judging by the numbers, the use of hashtags was not as significant in this data set, but some still came up as more prominent. The four most used hashtags are #SarahEverard (20 ref.), #stalkers (20 ref.), #register (18 ref.) and #killthebill (11 ref.).

## 7.2 Themes

After NVivos search for commonalities in the data, five distinct themes were found. It was clear from the first overview of the themes that NVivo bases its analysis on most frequent word and its context in the tweets, seeing that three of the themes had similar content. The five themes are ‘everard’, ‘vigil’, ‘everard vigil’, ‘legal observers’ and ‘police’. Same as with the structural analysis, each of the theme comes with a set of subcategories, showing in what different contexts that theme was presented, giving each theme a “subtheme”. So, although the themes ‘everard’, ‘vigil’ and ‘everard vigil’ to the most part contain the same set of tweets, the subcategories show in what other contexts these themes were incorporated. To exemplify; the theme ‘everard’ contained subthemes such as ‘everard case’ (61 ref.) and ‘everard murder’ (12 ref.), the ‘vigil’ theme contained ‘vigil report’ (97 ref.) and ‘vigil maskless’ (61 ref.). However, the theme ‘everard vigil’, which in addition to being a theme in itself also showed as a subtheme in the other two categories, making it the most referenced in the data set – 3911. If I were to overlook the fact that the three most referenced themes mostly consist of overlapping content, it is ‘everard’ that has the most references in the data set, with 4289 references.

The ‘legal observers’ theme with its 1782 references, did not have any subcategories like the other themes. This is due to the fact that 1781 of those references refers to the same tweet, which had been retweeted that number of times. The tweet in question is the one mentioned in the initial findings (see above). Because of the high number of retweets and thus, the number of times this tweet appears in the data set, NVivo declared it a full theme. Because it only consists of one tweet it will not be considered a theme moving forward in this analysis.

Lastly, looking at the ‘police’ theme it, like the others contained subthemes which highlight the different contexts in where the police was mentioned. The police were referenced 1349

times in the data and the top mentioned subthemes were ‘police commissioner’ (124 ref.), ‘police response’ (93 ref.) and ‘police actions’ (70 ref.). However, the most referenced subtheme was named ‘month police officers’ (484 ref.) which, like ‘legal observers’ were all taken from a single tweet that has been retweeted. Looking at the tweet further highlights NVivo’s way of searching for commonalities in the data, focusing on most frequent words and naming the themes accordingly:

*“So that’s a police officer charged with Sarah Everard’s kidnap and murder, a police officer convicted of attacking a woman on the streets and a police officer convicted of being a pedophile neo-Nazi terrorist in the same month police officers were given more power than ever before.” (#278)*

Moving to the second set of data – the sample of tweets that were posted between April 4<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup> the main topics of discussion on twitter differed from the tweets sent just a couple of days prior. After NVivos thematic analysis the most referenced topics were ‘abusers’ (3380 ref.), ‘register’ (2727 ref.), ‘stalkers’ (2698 ref), ‘vigil’ (1122 ref.) and ‘women’ (724 ref.). Just as with the last data set some of the themes had the exact same content and were incorporated as a subtheme in some of the other top referenced themes. In addition to the themes ‘register’ and ‘abuser’, NVivo also distinguished ‘national register’ and ‘domestic abuser’ as themes, with 2689 and 3368 references respectively, but since they are accounted for in the other themes they will not be considered separately.

The top subtheme in the ‘vigil’ category was ‘peaceful vigil’ with 626 references, just before ‘everard vigil’ with its 423 references. In the ‘women’ category the most referenced subtheme is one that has the same structure as the ‘police’ theme. It is taken from a highly retweeted tweet and has named the theme from a set of words included in the tweet. The subtheme is ‘ago women’ and has 587 references. The theme is taken from the following tweet:

*“Just under a month ago women were manhandled and arrested by Met police in Clapham Common for holding a peaceful vigil in honour of Sarah Everard. Laws are not enforced consistently, they are selectively enforced in the interested of an increasingly corrupt state apparatus.” (#2163)*

### 7.3 Tweet content

When reading through the tweets there were some clear commonalities in the way the tweets were composed as well as the intent behind the tweet. I was able to divide the tweets into some general categories given the nature and directionality of their statements: 1. Directed to

the public/'whoever reads this' expressing anger/disappointment about police, government and institutional actions. 2. Directed to the public informing and illustrating unjust actions and decision making from police, government, institutions and organisations. 3. Directed straight to the police expressing anger/disappointment about their actions. 4. Directed to the public encouraging to take action/demand change. The first two categories bare similar content and are more often than not referencing the same isolated incident or event. What differs is the way the statement is formulated. The first group come from a more personal point of view and include more emotionally charged words and are usually focusing on one specific incident and target, whereas the second group looked at the events from a more macro point of view. Instead of referencing one particular incident, this group of authors summarize the bigger picture and address what these incidents and their repercussions mean as a whole. They write in a more commentary sense, rather than from a personal point of view and do not use as much emotionally charged vocabulary. Here are some examples to illustrate my conclusions: As mentioned, the pervading emotion expressed in the first group was anger and disappointment. The range of emotion spread from more loud expressions, where the anger was more prominent:

*"What a disgrace! How is this against the law, but BLM\* protest weren't? Crowds outside a school in Batley weren't but people at the Sarah Everard vigil were?? How are the police 'deciding' what is the against the law, and the bigger question, WHY are they deciding?!" (#90)*

*"[...] the guys a cop. And police are already beating the shit out of protestors, what do you want to do, have the cops resume murdering people? Wasn't Sarah Everard enough?" (#6)*

to a more understated and informative expression, where the anger has instead been replaced by disappointment:

*"Stumbled into a #killthebill protest in Manchester today. Witnessed a girl getting handled by multiple police men to the point they carried her off with her trousers half way down her legs.. about 100 metres away from a Sarah Everard memorial. How is this still happening?" (#219)*

*"If only the police had this much passion for protecting Sarah Everard" (#13)*

*“Last week women held a get together for Sarah Everard after she had been kidnapped and murdered to show respect and solidarity and were harassed and manhandled by the police...one week on scenes in the park are worse and nothing is done so I ask you where is the justice?”. (#5070)*

*“Not surprising to hear these results. Police pinning women to the floor seem to be standard practice now. Police ‘acted appropriately’ at Sarah Everard vigil.” (#5079)*

Some took the personal standpoint further than simply expressing disappointment and anger and instead expressed the lack of trust that came from the events that took place and some agents actions regarding these events:

*“[...] Couldn’t those idiots be better employed doing something useful? Shouldn’t they have said ‘No, not doing that’? I’ve always been a staunch supporter of the police. Since the Sarah Everard horror, no more. THEY need to prove themselves to ME” (#144)*

*“This verdict isn’t a surprise but it makes you question how independent the review actually is, considering the images of Officers throwing punches to unarmed attendees. Not sure the one-sidedness helps rebuild trust in the Police Service either.” (#5917)*

The tweets featured in the second group used more descriptive language instead of emotional and focused more on informing the readers on what is happening. There are expressions of anger and disappointment here as well, but it is not being expressed in the same personal way as the other groups of tweets are:

*“So to be clear in the past month members of the Met police force:*

- *Killed Sarah Everard*
  - *Were convicted of being a neo-Nazi terrorist*
  - *Brutalised people at a vigil*
- AND one allegedly raped two colleagues*
- Enough...” (#1345)*

The aim in these tweets seems to be to show the public that the problem is bigger than one single event. The authors here bring all the problematic events to light and circle the overlaying issue behind all this. The authors even used the same word to express the problem and so a clear thematic pattern emerged:

*“Yesterday an Institution told us the Police acted appropriately at the Sarah Everard vigil. Today we have a Commission telling us Britain is not institutionally racist. Gaslighting on a national scale. It’s both insulting and disturbing and dovetails into a fascist narrative” (#1689)*

*“Just incase you’re doubting yourself, Britain is institutionally racist and the police handling of the vigil for Sarah Everard was inappropriate. You are being gaslit by your government and the media” (#4600)*

*“British Justice:*

- *Police handled Sarah Everard vigil perfectly*
- *Cameron behaving 100% perfectly with hedge fund boss*
- *Boris Johnson 4 year affair was totally legitimate*
- *There is not structural racism in the UK*

*“There is no justice. Just perpetual gaslighting of us all” (#4646)*

Another pattern that became visible was that some authors took an even further step back and commented on these events impact on history:

*“Two things that really bugged me this week are that the people in charge get to decide what goes down in history. In other words that Britain is not institutionally racist and that police acted appropriately at the Sarah Everard vigil” (#331)*

*“Anyone who defends the police violence against women at the Sarah Everard vigil/protest will be on the wrong side of history as surely as those who defended the police actions at Orgreave”. (#2177)*

Besides the overarching theme of the expressed disappointment in the police as well as

government/institutional decision making regarding how the police acted during Sarah Everards vigil, there was another tier to this theme. Since the overall content and directionality of the tweets are congruent with the second thematic category, they were counted into that category, however the number of tweets referencing this topic are enough for it to be considered a subcategory. While still subtly expressing anger and disappointment and informing the readers about unjust behaviours and decision making, the topic has instead shifted to the Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton's presence at the vigil and the events that followed. While the people present at Sarah Everards vigil were deemed to be the illegally and were removed from site by force, the police commissioner stated that Kate Middleton was there for work and was not thereby breaking any law. The reactions found in the data set regarding this statement took different approaches. Some illustrated the dissonance in the whole event:

*“'Police chief insists Kate Middleton was at Sarah Everard vigil for ‘work’ So Ms Middleton (no mask) was there ‘legally’ and as soon as she left, the other were there ‘illegally’? [...]” (#3985)*

*“Palace sources said that Kate Middleton’s attendance at the Sarah Everard vigil was private. Now Cressida Dick says that the Duchess of Cambridge was ‘working’ at the same time so her attendance was legal. Was is a private visit or was she ‘working’? Which is it?” (#4263)*

Others put more focus onto Kate Middleton and her intentions:

*“I thought Kate Middleton was there out of grief for Sarah Everard and to show unity, that's how all the Monarch lovers made out. Now it turns out she was "working" So it WAS a PR stunt after all. I knew that but it's nice to have it confirmed” (#4280)*

*“So Kate Middleton attended the Sarah Everard vigil for PR ... we seriously need to just eat the rich at this point” (#4338)*

But the majority of the tweets commenting on this topic did it in a more general sense. Like

some of the other authors they did not focus on one particular agent or event, but instead took a step back and commented on what this kind of behaviour and decision-making entails for the bigger picture:

*“And I leave you tonight with ‘Police chief insists Kate Middleton was at Sarah Everard vigil ‘legally’ for ‘work’ Rules for them, other rules for us [...].” (#3164)*

*“Because of course, in this country people from certain backgrounds can never be considered to have broken the law” (#6157)*

*“So Kate Middleton was legally working when attending the vigil for Sarah Everard, but the vigil was an illegal mass gathering...so it’s only legal when it’s a royal PR stunt? OK got it” (#6169)*

Moving to category three. What separates these authors from the first and second group is the directionality of the tweets - who the tweet is intended for. Instead of expressing their discontent to the public and their entire pool of twitter followers, these authors used their feeds to directly confront and question the agents who are responsible for the events that sparked the outrage online. The tweets bare similar content to what has previously been presented but here the authors of the tweets took two different approaches in their delivery. There was either a statement made regarding their previous actions along with a comment about what the consequences are and what need to change:

*“A Met Police officer arrested for the murder of Sarah Everard. A Met Police officer facing disciplinary 4 years after he allegedly raped 2 of his female colleagues. A Met Police officer convicted of offences related to a banned Neo-Nazi group. Some serious review needed @metpoliceuk” (#827)*

*“You know, we all saw what happened. When you pull shit like this, all you do further undermine your credibility and public trust in the authorities. And that doesn’t lead anywhere good.” (#6261)*

In the other approach the authors formed their allegation as a question, directly questioning their actions and the decisions they made. One prime example of this is the tweet sent by our opinion leader, who's tweets had been retweeted the most in our data set, but there are plenty more with the same sentiment:

*“What are you doing #metpolice haven’t we had enough police scandals recently?” (#148)*

*“Is this what your chief called a reset? Young women like Sarah Everard terrified in their bedrooms by police inept thuggery. Is any woman safe from male police officers?” (#151)*

One common trait in these tweets is that they emphasize the directionality by either tagging the Metropolitan polices' twitter account (@metpoliceuk), making sure they will be notified about the inquiry, or hashtagging them (#metpolice), making their statement a part of the theme created by this hashtag, and will be included whenever this hashtag is searched for.

The last category focuses its attention back to the public but instead of just shedding light on the bad things that has been happening, these group of authors used their feeds to encourage people to do more than just comment on the events. The tweets here range from more general statement where authors explain that in order to encourage change, we can only rely on ourselves:

*“It is no longer good enough to accept thing because they are the way they’ve always been done. In the last 2 days, we have seen reports into the Sarah Everard policing and institutional racism being clearly preordained and unsatisfactory. We can’t trust anybody but ourselves” (#401)*

*“- Yesterday, we woke up to news that the police acted appropriately at the Sarah Everard Vigil  
- Today, we wake up to news that the UK is not institutionally racist  
Trust & Justice will never be given to us. We must wrestle for it with all our collective might!” (#658)*

To more directed and encouraging statements, both commenting on what people have done but also to motivate people to take action and join the work, as well as get attention to the work:

*“@guardian Workers! Prepare to vote against crime bill following police’s actions at vigil for Sarah Everard on March 13<sup>th</sup>, prompting controversial police response and arrests for violation of regulations COVID-19. Sarah Everard disappeared in South London.” (#1453)*

*“Haringey members stand firmly against the #PoliceCrackDownBill. We witnessed the corruption of police behaviour at the Sarah Everard vigil, and stand by our experience: we deserve better & will continue to fight for it, no matter what.*  
*Sign below to support the statement” (#5765)*

*“Students protest across UK to demand action on sexual violence”*  
*(#6219)*

What is notable about the tweets presented here is that most of them included a direct link to an article, a news segment or a twitter page belonging to a news network and their reporting about the different events we have read about. So, the tweets were mostly a direct reaction or a response to what the media reports and their close following on what was happening.

Moving to the newer set of data, and the tweets collected on a later date. Some time has passed since the widely discussed events took place, but during that time some new events happened that added both brand new topics to the discussion as well as a new perspective to the topics that are already at the top of discussion. The same four categories were used when grouping this set of tweets and again, the first two groups contained the most data. While still directing the tweets to the public and informing about the events taking place as well as expressing disappointment about their actions, the focus has shifted. Instead of reporting solely about the police actions in each of the events, the authors are now illustrating how this is not an isolated incident. While still referencing the same events as the tweets before, the narrative has shifted and are now shedding light on the underlying problems:

*“There comes a time when events like the suppression of the vigil at Clapham Common in the wake of Sarah Everard’s murder (allegedly by a #MetPolice officer), and the police brutality against protestors in Bristol, are exposing the real role of the police #PoliceBrutality” (#4653)*

*“Police brutality needs to STOP. George Floyd was innocent. Daunte Wrights case wasn’t an ‘accident’ Breonna Taylor deserves way better. Sarah Everard is not to blame. Adam Toledo was just a kid. Just because you have a badge crime isn’t crime when you do it” (#1729)*

*“Just under a month ago women were manhandled and arrested by Met Police in Clapham Common for holding a peaceful vigil in honour of Sarah Everard. Laws are not enforced consistently, they are selectively enforced in the interest of an increasingly corrupt state apparatus”*  
(#2163)

When it comes to people expressing disappointment towards government and/or higher institutions, one subtheme was clear:

*“In March, we were horrified to learn of the death of Sarah Everard, so much that so many took to #reclaimthestreets. Only a month later @djshrewbury has voted against having a register for stalkers and domestic abusers. Seems a month is a long time in politics, despicable”*  
(#111)

*“The #LiarJohnson government rejected measures to register stalkers and domestic abusers. They said they would support them after death of Sarah Everard. You just can’t trust anything they say. #ToryHypocrisy”*  
(#2738)

*“Remember when the Government responded to Sarah Everards killing with words. Just weeks later we find out that words were all they were. We need this action” (#3947)*

In this over all data set there were more subthemes prominent compared to the first set of tweets. Other than the government's decision about the register, the topic that was highly discussed was regarding the police actions towards the royal family versus their actions towards everyone else. During the time when these set of tweets were posted, Prince Philip passed away, and a vigil was held in his honour outside of Buckingham Palace. And how the police acted there quickly became the topic of discussion:

*“A vigil for Phil the Greek and nobody thrown on the ground and handcuffed by the Met like a bunch of stormtroopers. What is the difference from this and a peaceful vigil for murder victim Sarah Everard?” (#122)*

*“I don’t see riot police kicking off like they did at the Sarah Everard vigil? Yet again, the rules don’t apply to them and it’s plain to see” (#1995)*

*“[...] Sarah Everard silent vigil turned into chaos because of policing tactics but today no interference from the police. Why why why? One rule for them, one for us!” (#442)*

*“The rationale for not allowing public gathers that was used 3 weeks ago for some reason [do not] apply today. Sarah Everards death deserves to be honoured as equally as prince Philips, it’s a disgrace to her memory that it’s not” (#487)*

A lot of the tweets following this topic of discussion included pictures from each of the vigils, along with headlines saying, “*a picture is worth a thousand words*”, “*vigil vs. vigil*”, while some spared no details in their comparisons:

*“We are low-class filth to them. Don’t let dear BBC fool you. Just compare the 2 vigils here. Many unmasked for Philip. Everyone masked for Sarah. One vigil for 99yr old. Another for 33yr old murder victim. One of their own killed her. [Pictures attached]” (#4637)*

As for the last two categories, there were not as many tweets in this set directed straight to a particular agent but the ones that were had a different sentiment to them compared to the other data set. The overarching theme in this data set seemed to be to comment on the underlying problems and the bigger issues that led to the events, as well as what triggered the entire movement in the first place:

*“I can’t imagine how might make women feel. A month ago, the police forcibly, and violently, dragged (masked) women away from a vigil for Sarah Everard. Last night, an officer danced for a crowd of drunks (most of whom are unmasked men) @metpoliceuk, this isn’t right” (#92)*

*“@StateDeptSpox @hk\_watch Why don’t you compare police reactions to protests in HK, US and UK? BLM protests? Elijah McClain violin vigil? Kill the Bill protests? Sarah Everard vigil? Or do you call HK riots ‘peaceful demonstration’ compared to playing violin in vigil?” (#1735)*

The same can be said about the tweets that fit in the last category, encouraging action and demanding change, but also lifting the initiatives coming from all that has happened. They again shifted the focus from the isolated events and police actions to the bigger issues and especially the problem that triggered the movement:

*“Proposal of Sarah Everard’s Law – Criminal defence cannot question the victim’s clothing as part of a case. Sign the petition!” (#1768)*

*“Edinburgh pair create local group to help women get home safely after death of Sarah Everard” (#2622)*

*“Crowd pauses, chants of ‘black lives matter’ and ‘no justice, no police, fuck the police’. These protests which were kickstarted by police brutality at the vigil for murdered Sarah Everard have mobilised dozens of different groups and organisations against more police powers” (#14)*

#### **7.4 Who is tweeting?**

Most of the tweets presented so far, including the tweets written by our opinion leaders have

been sent by someone from the general population and who is not representing any specific organisation, company, political party, or the like. I did identify some stand out accounts that belonged to people speaking for something other than themselves. Not counting the accounts belonging to big journalistic pages like BBC and The Independent, who frequently reported the developments of the events on their accounts, the organisations that were present in the discussion on twitter seemed to be smaller organisations along with some independent political journals and news channels, as well as smaller political parties (judging from the information in their twitter accounts). The absence of bigger organisations and what that means for this study will be discussed more in the next chapter, as well as what these organisations involvement means. Here I will present the findings on their own.

The nature of the tweets varies from having a more neutral position, mainly commenting on what is happening, presenting statistics, and showing sympathies and support, to taking a firmer stance against unjust behaviour. Comparing two side by side there is The Churchill Project, an organisation tied to Hillsdale College, who simply stated:

*“Flowers and tributes laid for Sarah Everard in Bristol today” (#2)*

along with a picture from the site. The other example comes from a local union-like organisation called Acorn Haringey:

*“Haringey members stand firmly against the ‘PoliceCrackdownBill. We witnessed the corruption of police behaviour at the Sarah Everard vigil, and stand by our experience: we deserve better & we will continue to fight for it, not matter what. Sign below to support the statement [...]”*  
(#5765)

Besides looking for what organisations were taking part in the discussion, I also looked for any significant person whose input in the discussion would give some impact. The same was found here as with the organisations. Although these people are for me, not anyone well known they each have thousands of followers and seem to represent a specific point of view or standpoint when it comes to their accounts and tweets. Two examples of this are someone who goes by The Defender on twitter, who on his twitter pages states ‘*it’s time for real changes for the many not the few*’, and Steve Bray, the founder of SODEM (Stand of Defiance European Movement). Each of their tweets, as well as the others collected into this

category, shows more openly their position on how these events played out:

*“Last week women held a get together for Sarah Everard after she had been kidnapped and murdered to show respect and solidarity and were harassed and manhandled by police...one week on scenes in the park are worse and nothing is done so I ask you where is the justice #killthebill”*  
(#6069)

*“What a shock...not! Met Police found to have acted appropriately at the Sarah Everard vigil.”* (#6243)

## 8. Discussion

The focal questions here are if the tweets in this collective online phenomenon have sparked the start of a potential social movement and if so, what would characterize that movement. The tweets display an evolution in the topics of discussion. What started as a discussion about the problem with women's safety in public spaces expanded and transformed into a discussion about distrust in police responsibility and misconduct. The collective events of Sarah Everards kidnapping and murder, the actions at her vigil versus Prince Philips vigil, and the higher authorities justifications of these actions proofs that the likely social movement to grow from this would be a movement about police reform. The domino effect of these events is what sparked the outrage online and the content clarifies that the police is the clear opposition in this cause. While the focus here was on the Sarah Everard case, some peripheral events that occurred under the same time span ended up falling under the same category and was included as part of the problem formulation. The Kill the Bill protests were arranged due to the governments bill, suggesting that police get more power when it comes to protests and the data also showed peoples disappointment in the police decision to not create a national register for domestic abusers and serial stalkers. The level of organisation behind these particular initiatives cannot be declared on the basis of the tweets, but their claims and issues align with what can be seen in the data and so there is opportunity for a coalition.

While the issue of the matter is clear and there is a cause to possibly get behind, the criteria for social movements demand much more and the dynamics of them need to be clear. In this case one of the major criteria is missing: longevity. The couple of weeks span in which this

data was extracted from is not enough time to assert that these events amount to a comprehensive social movement. This will make it seem like whatever arguments are made based on the social movement criteria that can be detected in the data is irrelevant because it is set in an isolated moment, but the focus here is on potentiality and the likelihood of a movement that could come into existence based on what can be seen in the tweets. The data does however show traces of longevity. The tweets follow a pattern in their content. Starting with highlighting that it was a police officer responsible for Sarah Everards murder, followed by recording the use of excessive force used by the police at the participants in the vigil, to shedding light that they adhere to different rules depending on who the situation is regarding to. These are all separate examples that all together exemplify the bigger issue, and that are discussed both separately and together in the data. The later the tweet is sent, it often references a previous event or instant that aligns with the current occurring problem, proving that this issue has some level of sustainability.

Besides longevity the main criteria for social movements are collective identity, collective action, and organisation, and some of the dynamics found in social movements include mobilization, coalition, and a display of WUNC. Collective action within social movements come in different forms, one of which is spreading protest messages through social media. After Sarah Everards death people took to twitter and other forums to express both their condolences and bring up the ongoing problem regarding women's safety, sparking what the media called an 'online movement'. This then led to the vigil turned protest, which in turn sparked another online movement where the events that unfolded during the vigil/protest were protested. When looking at collective action you focus on each individual event, on how they happened and what are the general principles behind them. In this case each event sparked the next and laid the ground for the protests that followed. Even though they are separate events they all stem from the same issue that is just manifested in different instances, namely the lacking police reform. Social movements are made up of multiple collective actions, and the online activities as well as the vigil/protests are two examples of collective actions form in this instance. The difference between collective action and mobilization is the latter require conscious planning and organising. The data is lacking evidence for effort of mobilization however, looking at the events leading up to the vigil, the discussions with the police and the disappointing results from those discussions, the people were encouraged by Sisters Uncut to attend the vigil/protest "with your sadness and your rage". The details of their engagement in this, and how many was reached by this is unknown for this case but it shows that there

existed some effort for mobilization regarding an issue related to the bigger cause: the police failed to serve their citizens.

Sisters Uncut most likely have their devoted followers who identify with their cause and who most likely attended the vigil/protest to show solidarity. The lack of mobilization for the bigger common issue in this case might be due to the lack of collective identity for the larger population who started this discussion in the first place. People are more inclined to act on behalf of a movement when they feel a sense belonging to that specific group. What is lacking here is a strong sense of ‘we’. There is no common factor that extends over all the events that shows that there is a particular group that stand against this issue. Ergo, the collective identity is weak. However, the first step of identity creation is visible. In order for there to be an us, there needs to be a them, an opposing force you are fighting to change, and the them in this case is much more prominent. When talking about the policing issue a lot of the tweets share similar discourse and, in some cases even use the same vocabulary to describe the problem. Phrases like “*one rule for them, one rule for us*” capture the overall problem with what is happening and summarizes the problem in one sentence that could easily be used as the staple standpoint for a collective to work against. The events that have preceded, and what has been said about them in the data show that the police along with the specific group of people they have treated favourably, specifically the royals, are the opposition in this cause. But as the situation is now it is the police and the royals versus everyone who is not police or royalty, and that is too general for there to form a collective identity. This is again mainly due to the short-lived nature of this campaign and the lack of longevity. There hasn’t been enough time for people to come together and form a community outside of twitter. Albeit social media has made the process of mobilizing and spreading information much more accessible and a lot easier and judging from the number of tweets and retweets there are regarding this issue there are a lot of people who stand behind the claims that police behaviour need to change. The sharing nature and culture of social media enables us to find likeminded people much faster and it makes it easier to see that you are not alone in your ideas and that there are others out there sharing your experiences and beliefs. This will encourage people to contribute to the discussion and join the fight, even if it is something as easy as retweeting. Resending someone else’s tweet shows that you agree with what they are saying and want to continue spreading that message; showing solidarity with that cause, which can be exemplified in the data. Although social media and online movements create platforms for people to easily spread information and advocate for a cause, it creates a problem of it being too easy and too

accessible, causing the issue to come to halt at only being a so-called keyboard movement. So, committing to organising or doing something outside of the online platform will be a stretch for people, thus hindering the solidifying of a collective identity. In the case of the “Sarah Everard movement” the vigil/protest took the cause out from twitter which created the first step for it possibly growing to a social movement.

Another crucial factor to social movements is a level of organising. Both within the movement community and with external actors. Each step, each event requires conscious planning and organising, with support from a coalition. The level of organising in this case is very scattered. While the tweeting and retweeting require consciousness there is no preconceived thought or plan behind those messages. People took matter into their own hands to inform the public of the problems, and while that caught attention by the media and possibly put some pressure on the concerning parties, it starts and stops on twitter. With the fast-paced nature of social media and information spreading when enough time passes this will only become an instant of online outrage. This is a good start, but it needs organising, follow ups preferably outside of the online forum and support from established groups and organisations. The vigil/protest took the cause from the screen to the streets and was properly organised by an established group, and it reached the people who started online and who later took to the streets. The snag here is that on the one hand we have an aggrieved group of people who have expressed their problem with a certain issue and who seem passionate about changing it, and on the other we have an established organisation, Reclaim These Streets – an organisation who works for women’s safety, who organised an event to allow people to further show solidarity with what had happened. Thirdly there is yet another organisation, Sisters Uncut, a direct-action group who stand against domestic violence, who showed their support to the cause by encouraging their followers to attend the vigil despite the decisions that has been made. There are three agents involved but who seem to be operating by their own agendas. What is missing is a bridge between the three, showing that they cooperate in the fight regarding this issue. While it is not the case in this particular event, this could be seen as a spark for a potential future coalition seeing that all three clearly resonate with the issue. Although the organisations were absent in the twitter data there is no telling whether members of these organisations were partaking in the discussions, speaking as themselves instead of a representative of that organisation. This would further show that these ideals align, seeing that the person who supports one particular organisation and their cause also stand behind the new cause that has been raised on twitter, which further shows that there is

potential for a coalition. As the situation stands the organisational involvement, both when it comes to the organisers behind the vigil and the organisations present in the data who just communicated their support on twitter, there is more a case of organisational resonance at the moment, rather than organisational contribution. But if someone would take the reins regarding the potential police reform movement and start organising more events, there are candidates for the start of a coalition, and for further building up the movement.

## 9. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate a number of tweets related to the murder of Sarah Everard and to analyse what can be said about the content of those tweets in terms of social movement theories. This was never a study about a social movement, but an investigation of a collection of tweets – an inquiry of a situation, to see if there is potential for a movement to grow. Based on the finding there is a lot that speaks for the potential for this to grow into a bigger movement. We can see at least the initial stages of some of the key components; the majority of people tweeting about this, highlighting the problem, and stating claims regarding what needs to change shows collective action. The vigil shows potential for organisation and mobilization, and that people are willing to take the cause from the screen to the streets. The fact that the tweets mention past events that exhibit the same problem show some longevity with the problem and the fact that the police is the common denominator throughout the discussions show a clear opponent in the cause and enables the first step in collective identity formation. One issue that remains is that the majority of the fight is done online and so, it is harder to operationalize this cause basing it solely on looking a collection of tweets spanning over a period of time. What we know about social movements today is based on studies developed when movements took to the streets. Notions like Charles Tilly's criteria for movements: the worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment behind a cause is harder to claim online due to the overly accessible and fickle nature of social media. It is easy to make claims and spread the word about a problem, but it is harder to convince people of the credibility behind a cause with nothing more but a 280-character statement.

But the question in the end is: is there a sustained campaign here and can this group remobilize? How strong are the factors that require the campaign to gain the validity it needs to keep the momentum and continue fighting this cause? As the campaign stands now, the sense of identity and level organisation is lacking, making the overall campaign too weak for

it to be connected to a social movement. While the possibilities and the initial stages of them can be detected, there isn't any tangible evidence in the data that suggests that it will take off. One factor ultimately thrives with help of the other in order to grow: mobilization requires organisation, and a way for identity develop and solidify is through mobilization, and so the fact that they are all a bit unravelled in this stage is not surprising. It all starts with organisation and the vigil and the organisers behind it showed potential for better organisation for the bigger cause, as well as the will to take this fight beyond twitter, and other campaigns with the same opponent, namely Kill the Bill are already on the streets with a similar message, which shows there is opportunity for coalition formation. The proof of organisation that is evident in the data is happening in separate corners and with different agendas, but notably against the same opponent.

Identity is an abstract characteristic which is hard to define with the naked eye, but when it comes to movement identity and collective feeling of belonging, identity is performed. Clearly the level of individuals internal feelings of belonging to the group isn't something that can be accounted for from an outside view, but groups who work together for a cause tend to show something that characterize their specific collective, be it as simple as a slogan that people can get behind. Something small (or big) that strengthens the group identity and that distinguishes them. Although the first steps towards identity forming is promising given the evidence in the data, it needs to be more tangible.

Although these factors are lacking, something that clearly speaks for the potential for growth is the number of people who took initiative to speak up for the cause. With this much participation from the beginning stages and the fact that that big of a crowd showed up for the vigil increases the chances that remobilization in the future, if a new protest event is organised, would have a successful outcome. Which in turn might create a snowball effect for more initiatives to form and thus, for the lacking factors to get the opportunity to become fully realised and solidified. While there is work that needs to be done on some of the main components required for this to be connected to a social movement, there is definitely potential for there to grow something from it. All the pieces are there, someone just needs to take the reins and put them all together.

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