Crime in the Suburbs

A critical discourse analysis of how suburban residents of South Africa, and The United States talk about crime on local Facebook groups.

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Dissertation submitted December 2023, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA in Global Media and Communications 2023

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Tanja Bosch. Your guidance, encouragement, and free coffee this year have been invaluable.

I would also like to thank my family for their patience and support these last two years, as well as all the friends I have made through this journey. Thank you all for being there to share wisdom, laughs, and kindness during the amazing and challenging times these last two years.

Finally, I want to thank my home of New Jersey, for frustrating, and inspiring me, and the city of Cape Town, for being my adopted home for the duration of this research.

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore the ways in which suburban residents of Cape Town South Africa, and New Jersey, USA use local Facebook groups to talk about crime. While these locations may have many differences, in their respective local Facebook groups they exhibit very similar fears around crime. As suburban development continues to grow in both these countries, examining the culture these spaces help shape remains a valuable project. Notably, authors such as Rachel Heiman, and Nina Eliasoph have worked to outline the ways in which suburban residents work to create and sustain their identity in an American suburban context. Nicky Falkof has worked to do the same for the South African context, showing how fear of crime is reproduced on local Facebook groups. However, this dissertation aims to take these concepts a step further through conceptualizing this culture of fear as a global phenomenon and linking together these two locations. Utilizing scholarship on colonialism, and whiteness, this dissertation will illustrate how local Facebook groups work to reinforce an existing ideological construction of suburban spaces built on colonial ideals of domesticity, and individualism. Through a critical discourse analysis of posts and comments found on local suburban groups, in New Jersey and Cape Town, I illustrate how these spaces serve as key locations for the performance of a middle-class position, where residents work to both contest and reinforce middle-class ideals, of personal responsibility, and rational discourse. All of this is then framed in an economic and social situation of increasing precarity, wherein suburbs and their residents are forced to make sense of increasingly unstable subject positions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research is an exploration of anxiety and the ways that it manifests in the contemporary world. Specifically, it is an exploration of anxiety in the suburban middle class. In both South Africa and the United States, where this research is focused, there exists a class of people, commonly referred to as the middle class, who while not necessarily white, occupy a position in society in which the "performance of whiteness" is essential (Falkof, 2022, pp. 164). This group often finds their home in the suburbs of their respective territories, largely domestic spaces, in which the more comfortable and affluent members of society congregate (Durrington, 2009). While these terms will be further interrogated in the following chapters, what remains notable about this group of (mostly) white suburban residents, is that, despite their relative degree of comfort, and affluence, they are often those who experience the greatest degree of fear and anxiety about safety and security (Bauman, 2005). This is not a new concept, the increased scale of environmental, technical, and economic crisis brought about through modernization has as Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) argue created a society highly preoccupied with risk. However, for the middle-class suburban resident, it would often appear that their concerns, fears, and anxieties are misplaced. Rather than focusing their fears on the structural systems that cause these crises, they often direct their fears into the moral panics that frequently grace our news sources.

According the Cohen (1987) moral panics are "A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (pp. 9). In other words, in the face of large scale systematic insecurity, people will focus their energy on scapegoat fears, rather than the larger problems. Growing up in suburban New Jersey in the United States, while I never understood them as such, I experienced many moral panics, such as the annual fear that a lone madman would be handing out poisoned candy to unsuspecting children on Halloween (Best and Horiuchi, 1985). While these fears never seemed to manifest themselves in anything concrete, whether it was roving gangs, psychopaths, or Satanists, these figures haunted the peripheries of my childhood. In moving to Cape Town, I became aware of a similar phenomenon within middle-class suburban communities. Those same figures of panic appeared in South African popular imagination, and while they took on their own local characteristics, they appeared very similar to those I grew up with (Falkof, 2019; 2012). For this research however, I am less interested in the specific panics as such, but rather in their cause, in the discursive practices which allow middle-class moral panics to take shape. To achieve this goal, I will focus on analyzing discourses

around crime, not so much to understand how crime occurs in the suburbs, but on how crime discourse reflects the ways in which the middle class comes to understand themselves (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2016). Therefore, through this research, I aim to better understand how suburban, middle-class residents of Cape Town, South Africa, and New Jersey, United States use local Facebook groups to talk about crime.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 3, where I expand on the theory underpinning this work, the terms "middle class" and "suburb" can be unclear and contradictory in their meaning and often reflect a very narrow United States-centric understanding of the world. For example, a suburb as it is understood in the United States is a collection of low-density, single-family residential communities that occupy the peripheries of the city, and which feed into a central city (Fishman, 2002). However, when applied globally this definition fails to map accurately onto most cities. The periphery of many cities in the global south may look more like a patchwork of poor informal settlements, wealthy gated residential communities, and decentralized offices and factories (Fishman, 2018). In Cape Town, suburban neighborhoods like Newlands, and Claremont that are designated as "suburbs" are often closer to the city center than the apartheid-era townships and informal settlements which make up the actual periphery of the city (Lemanski, 2004). Even in the United States, these traditional definitions struggle to capture the decentralized nature of cities such as Los Angeles in which the traditional urban density of the city has been replaced with miles of highway and suburban sprawl, with extreme poverty rubbing shoulders with extreme affluence. All of this is not to say that we should get rid of the suburbs as a concept, but rather that they need to be more effectively incorporated into a global lexicon. Across the world, car-centric, highly segregated decentralized spaces exist, and it remains imperative to understand them. It is then, the aim of this project to contribute to this larger project of taking theory and observation made in the global south, and applying it to a global north context (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). Thus, hopefully broadening our understanding of both places.

The middle class, white suburban spaces of New Jersey and Cape Town serve as an excellent pair for this task. In addition to their similar experiences of moral panics, these two locations, New Jersey and Cape Town provide an interesting case study, because, despite their geographical differences, they do share a series of common traits. Both share a similar population density and feature a landscape in which some of the wealthiest communities rub shoulders with

some of the poorest (Turok et al. 2021; Sullivan, 2022). They are also relatively diverse places, that are at the same time highly segregated (Baker & Weber, 2021; Turok et al. 2021). While they may have had different experiences of the 20th century, these two places do share common ideological backgrounds. As McClintock (2013) argues during the colonial period ideas about whiteness did not just originate in Europe and filter down into the colonies, rather it was the colonial encounter that forged these ideas, with intellectual networks spanning from South Africa to the United States reproducing sharing and countering them. These ideas morphed into practices of segregation, each inspiring the other, and it was American ideas of Eugenics and racial purity that inspired the architects of Apartheid later in the century (Nightingale, 2015). While the individual histories of segregation in the USA and SA will be explicated in their respective chapters, by highlighting the similarities present in these places, I aim to show the continuities in the experiences of the white middle-class suburbanite.

The terrain chosen for this exploration is local Facebook groups, which are often found in suburban communities. Also known as community groups, they are understood as groups that form around a shared geographic area and allow members to buy and sell goods, communicate about events in the community, and initiate discussions around issues (Le Quere et al. 2022; Lopez & Butler, 2013). While their focuses range, one commonality is that they provide a space for residents of an area to see, and be seen, and to express their opinions and ideas. As public spaces in the suburbs shrink, and communities become more and more separated by gates and highways, Facebook often provides one of the few outlets for residents to engage in such behavior with their local community. Local Facebook groups also represent part of the "bricolage" in which people shape their identities and values, the discourse experienced playing a role in how they come to understand themselves and their communities (Barnhurst, 1998). Therefore, these discursive spaces serve as an excellent vantage point from which to study discourses on crime, as the comments and discussions seen can often serve to track the discursive processes that go into their formation.

This dissertation will begin with a review of the literature as it pertains to research on crime, social media, the middle class, suburbs, and where these things overlap. I will then work to build the theoretical foundation for research focusing on the public sphere, and performance online, followed by the framing of whiteness, and class and the ways in which these concepts work to

inform the construction of suburban spaces. Following this, after a brief overview of the methods used in this study, Chapters 3 and 4 will feature a discussion of the findings from New Jersey and Cape Town respectively. In addition to a discussion of the findings, each chapter will include a brief historical contextualization of the locations and some of their common experiences. I will then conclude with a final chapter which will attempt to find commonalities between the two locations' experiences with local Facebook groups and make prescriptions for future research goals.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1: Discourse on social media

The primary focus of this research is the ways in which users of local suburban Facebook groups talk about crime. While there is some disagreement as to what Facebook is understood as it is generally understood in the literature as a "digital platform." Defined by Srnicek (2016) "digital platforms" are "digital infrastructures", that "allow two or more groups to interact" by serving as "intermediaries" (pp. 24). Platforms allow for the formation of "networked publics" or publics, that "have been restructured by networked technology" (boyd, 2014, pp. 8). The current literature on discourse, in the "networked public" has been studied from many angles, such as pop culture (Unkel and Kumpel, 2020), tourism (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014), and health and well-being (Mclellan et al. 2016). However, primarily studies of discussion in networked publics focus on politics and the political. Outside of Facebook, most research on digital platforms has focused on Twitter (Smith et al. 2013) and focuses on the different forms political discussion takes on the site (Goyanes et al. 2021; Anderson and Huntington, 2017; Gil de Zuniga, 2012; Gervais, 2015). Tangentially related to this, there has been considerable scholarly work done on the spread and discussion of misinformation online (Su, 2021), especially related to topics related to health and vaccination (Jenkins & Moreno, 2020; Martin et al. 2020). On Facebook there have been similar studies done on disinformation (Anspach and Carlson, 2018), public health and vaccinations (Orr et al. 2016; Faasse et. al, 2016), and political discourse (Miller et al. 2015). However, these studies are often too broad and do not focus on the networked affordances of a specific platform. Therefore, as this study aims to focus specifically on discussion in local Facebook groups, a further review of the literature as it pertains to Facebook groups is needed.

Groups, as defined by Facebook are "a place to communicate about shared interests with certain people" (Facebook.com/help). According to Rodriguez (2020), Facebook chose to shift its focus onto groups after the controversy surrounding the 2016 election United States election and has had a steady growth in the number of users in groups since 2017. Kim et al. (2021) add that groups "can contain a variety of topics, from health and hobbies to religion and politics, and they can also promote a specific event or act as a marketplace" (pp. 1). Additionally, they can be open to anyone, accessible via a request to enter, or visible only through an invitation. Like most research on digital platforms, much focus has been devoted to the study of groups as political

spaces. Additionally, most research on groups has been conducted on open groups, that do not require invitation or application to enter. In the literature, open political groups, such as the ones studied by Sanfilippo, & Strandberg (2021), and Gromping (2014), are viewed as spaces that have a lower barrier to entry and often advertise large-scale protests and events to get involved in. Outside of the expressly political, there have been studies on a variety of other open groups on the platform, such as for people living with and managing medical conditions (Abedin et al. 2017; Partridge et al. 2018; Bender et al. 2011), teachers (Bergviken Rensfeldt et al. 2018), students (Chou & Pi, 2015), midwives (Morse and Brown, 2022), and hobbyists (Marceno et al. 2021). However, the groups studied for this research are all closed groups, which means that all participants have had to request to join the group and be approved by a moderator, oftentimes there are questions one must answer to join (af Segerstad et al. 2016). This means that closed groups often have a stronger sense of presumed privacy, unlike a post made to an open group (Johnson et al. 2018). Due to the challenges of access, there have been fewer studies on closed groups, but they have been studied as spaces for like-minded people to share political content, Rainie et al. (2012), Moody-Ramirez & Church (2019), Yannopoulou et al. (2019), and as safe spaces for women to gather to discuss and challenge gender roles. Studies specifically related to women-only groups have been conducted in Azerbaijan (Pearce et al. 2022) and in Pakistan (Younas et al. 2020; Pruchniewska, 2019), where the authors have found that these closed groups have been able to allow women a safe space in countries which can be extremely patriarchal. This idea of closed groups as spaces of solidarity is related to the study of the counter-public sphere or the idea that networked spaces online allow people with similar ideas to gather safely online and to counter predominant discourses in these safe corners of the internet (Jackson et al. 2020; Kuo; 2018, Jackson & Welles, 2015). This concept has also come under criticism for leaving most users isolated and failing to provide real-world solidarity (Hannah, 2021; Trott, 2020). However, this concept is not entirely relevant to this study, firstly because as will be elaborated upon in the following chapter, the public sphere as a theory is highly criticized, and therefore provides a weak foundation. In addition, these closed groups, are based on a common interest or point of identity. The local groups studied in this dissertation, are not based necessarily on shared ideas, but rather on shared location, oftentimes making them unique in that they do not bring people together from across the world, but rather from a small geographic area.

As touched upon in the previous chapter, these groups have a variety of uses and serve as a space to buy and sell items, advertise local goings-on, and, just in general exchange news (Le Quere et al. 2022; Lopez & Butler, 2013). Research into local Facebook groups, or community groups is a considerably smaller selection, with very few studies focusing on them at all. One similar focus has been on Facebook groups attached to university courses, where the authors have found that university courses that had an associated Facebook group had a greater sense of community and engagement in the courses (Akcaoglu & Lee 2018; Hong & Gardner, 2018; Sheeran & Cummings, 2018; Peeters & Pretorius, 2020; Ahern et al. 2016). Another similar focus comes from Facebook groups in Urban apartment settings, or as the authors call them, "weak tie" residential communities (Baborska-Narozny, 2016). The authors found that these groups took a considerable amount of management on the part of residents, but could also be used to solve individual and collective problems. Both this study and the study of university students while "local" in nature chose to focus instead on the effectiveness of the groups, in either building solidarity amongst residents or students or in fixing problems. Similarly, Lev-On and Steinfeld (2014), highlight the interesting space of municipal Facebook pages, as spaces where communities can interact, and while not specifically local groups, they do serve a similar purpose in bringing people together based on shared geographic region. However, these authors focus primarily on how local officials portray themselves rather than on discourse as such. The final study comes from De Meulenaere et al. 2020, who in studying Belgian local Facebook groups argue that they serve as "collaborative neighborhood awareness systems." These authors choose to focus more on the possibility of Facebook serving as a form of "hyperlocal media," filling the role that a local newspaper could have. Most notably, Falkof's (2022) study of a local suburban Johannesburg Facebook group provides the closest connection to the current study. However, Falkof chose to research an open-access Facebook group, therefore a gap exists in the current literature in which no current studies are focusing specifically on closed local suburban Facebook groups. As this study is focused on the discourse around crime in these groups, it is first necessary to review the current literature on crime and media before returning to look at the suburbs, Facebook, and crime.

2.2: Media and Crime

In discussing crime and media, it is important to clarify that while there is crime as it exists in a given geographic area, in discussing the media and crime, the primary scholarly focus is on

the concept of “fear of crime” (Lee, 2013; Warr, 2000). This refers in essence to perceptions of crime, rather than statistical occurrences of crime, which Lemanski (2006) clarifies further using the term “fear of crime plus two” to refer to the idea that these fears reflect not just ideas about crime, but also include fears of the larger socioeconomic fears of the time and region studied (pp. 789). The media's relationship to fear of crime has been well studied, with Heath and Gilbert (1996) arguing that it is not that the media directly creates fear of crime, but rather through overreporting on stories and focusing on violent crime they can create a skewed picture of who where and how crime is committed (Smolej & Kivouri, 2006; Choi et al. 2020; Callanan & Rosenberger, 2015). In print media, Azmat et al. (2007) and Williams and Dickinson (1993) found that print media plays a vital role in increasing public fear of crime, with tabloids generally reporting more sensationally on crime than broadsheets. Television news media has been found to have a similar effect with Chiricos et al. (1997) arguing that print media does not increase fear of crime while television news does. Generally, the findings indicate that TV news reporting of crime often portrays crime as a much more serious issue than statistics would reflect (Schlesinger et al. 1991; Pollak & Kubrin, 2007; Shin & Watson 2022). This finding when applied to specifically local television news by Romer et al. (2003) again confirmed the same findings. While not specifically related to the focus of this paper, Dowler (2003) also found that fictional television crime dramas can also increase audiences' fears of crime and understanding of police effectiveness. News media on digital platforms has followed a similar trend, while Roche et al. (2015) found that internet news sources do not increase fear of crime Intravia et al. (2017) and Prieto Curiel et al. (2020) have both found that on the contrary, social media use serves better to reflect users fears of crime, rather than actual levels of crime.

These findings have been reproduced in a number of specific geographic regions as well, with similar findings in Italy (Mastrorocco, & Minale, 2018), California (Callanan, 2012), Norway (Skilbrei, 2013), and Texas (Hollis et al. 2017). In South Africa specifically, the media and crime have been studied as a tool to alert people to the ever-present reality of crime (Du Plessis, 2003). Despite this, most studies of South African media have found that crime in the news is sensationalized, and leaves people confused about the actual reality of crime in the country (Grundlingh, 2017; Govender 2013; James and Collins, 2011). Kynoch et al. (2013) have specifically found that news media reporting of crime in South Africa has focused on creating a picture of white people as victims and portraying black people as criminals. Falkof (2022),

concurring with Kynoch, found similarly that in South Africa, the news media, often focus less on the systematic causes of crime in the country, rather choosing to focus on sensationalized stories that portray white people as victims. As these examples show media representation of crime is important because it works not just to create an understanding of who is a criminal but works to discipline viewers, to show them what is considered normal and what is considered deviant (Falkof, 2019). Additionally, as will be shown below, the media can help to show, where crime takes place affecting how locations are perceived.

In 1998, Barlow made the argument that "representations of the problem of crime and of the violence associated with African American political struggle have contributed to current ideological notions regarding 'young black males' as criminals." (pp. 149). This finding was confirmed by Warner, (2004), and Boda and Szabo (2011), who both found that media representations of crime have increased racial anxieties among the populations studied. These findings link to our focus on the suburbs, for as Jahiu and Cinnamon (2021), illustrate in their research into media perceptions of crime, there is a distinct "suburbanization" of crime perceptions in Toronto. As Heath and Petraitis (2017) argue, the media often directs fears of crime towards distant urban areas, a finding that was reproduced by Schwarze (2022), who shows that Chicago-based newspapers stigmatize certain urban neighborhoods as "crime-ridden" through their reporting. In the South African context, Falkof (2022) found that in media reporting there was a similar framing that created perceived risk in suburban areas. One instance in which crime was portrayed as occurring in the suburbs comes from Linneman (2010) who studied media reporting on drug-related crimes. He found that there was a gendered focus on reporting, focusing on women as a deviation from the "middle-class housewife" norm, and often excusing men for the same crimes. These concepts of the suburbs and the middle class will be interrogated further in the following chapters, but what remains important is that both terms remain contentious and there is limited scholarly agreement on their meanings. Therefore, a brief overview of the literature on the suburbs, and middle class is necessary, before returning to a conversation about crime in these locations.

2.3: Suburbs and the Middle Class

It is important to recognize that when discussing class, and especially the middle class, there is a great deal of disagreement over what these terms mean. While the theoretical underpinnings which I understand the terms to mean will be discussed further in the following

chapter, this section serves to provide a brief overview of the terrain of debate as it stands. Class can simply be defined as economic strata in each country (Cashell, 2008). Globally this presents a challenge, as what is middle income in one country, could be considerably higher or lower in another (Koo, 2016). Therefore, class and middle class have also been understood as households living with between 10 and 100 USD daily per capita incomes in PPP terms (Kharas, 2010). Income-based measures have been challenged however, with many more authors choosing to understand the middle class as those who would become poor in the absence of steady work (Eisenhauer, 2008), those who possess a steady well-paying job in their respective country (Banerjee & Duflo, 2008), or perceived vulnerability to poverty (Lopez-Calva & Ortiz-Jaurez, 2014; Zizzamia et al. 2016). South African scholars have made valuable contributions to concepts of class, as Visagie and Posel (2013) argue, there are very different conceptions of "middle class" in South Africa depending on location even within the same city (Ndlovu, 2020). Burger et al. (2015) argue that class can be objective but is also a subjective measure of how one perceives themselves. As Phadi and Ceruti (2011) note, "middle class" can also vary based on what people's reference points are. As they argue, a resident in Soweto, who might be termed "lower" class or income in South Africa, may view themselves as middle class, because they have a more permanent home, and a family member who works full time, compared to those who live in more informal housing and have less formal work. Lentz (2020) continues to challenge ideas of the middle class by arguing that it serves more as a socio-political category taken from a distinct context in the United States and applies to African society. Therefore, while economic factors do play a role in middle-class research, a more productive line comes from those who seek to theorize middle class in the realm of the cultural and social.

Bottero (2004), in line with Lentz, argues that the middle class as a term can be changed and deployed at different historical moments. Graeber (2014) concurs, arguing that the middle class in America is more related to if one feels that society is designed to serve them. He takes this a step further and says that the number of people who feel this way is shrinking and moving upward on the economic scale. Therefore, class in the current period is more about performing access to affluence and lifestyle through cultural taste and cachet (Visagie & Posel, 2013; Lawler, 2005). In other words, class comes into being through consumption (Henningsen, 2012). Social media use has been theorized as one realm in which class position which class can be performed with middle-class people in India, and China respectively using what they share on the platform to perform a

mix of both the consumption of certain goods, also acting in a traditionally moral way (Prabhakar et al. 2021; Peng, 2019) Similarly, Buscher (2016) studies the users of anti-poaching groups in South Africa, and notes a certain middle-class style of concern for wild spaces, but also an extremely punitive response to those caught poaching. As Buscher notes, protected parkland, presupposes a very Victorian ideal about the emptiness, and purity of natural spaces, viewing poachers as ruining these spaces, regardless of the socio-economic challenges which lead to poaching. The suburbs similarly, with their focus on closeness to nature, allow the middle class resident to apply these same standards of innocence and purity to themselves, through the purchasing of suburban homes. This provides a strong bridge into the concept of the suburbs, which also serve a similar function as well as allow for another space for the middle class to perform through consumption (Fishman, 2002).

As Heiman (2015) explores in her 1997 ethnography of a New Jersey suburb, houses, cars, and other accessories of suburban life allow a wide range of consumption practices, with the suburban house serving as the primary focus. Outside of this study, there has been little other work on New Jersey-specific suburbs, besides Beuschel & Reudel, (2009), who tracks changing development patterns in the state, noticing that individual house sizes are growing while the size of developments is shrinking. In relation to the suburbs and crime, Lemanski and Saff, (2010), compare residential suburbs in Cape Town, and Long Island, New York. They found that there is a culture of exclusion, based on presumed values of the community connected to a certain value. Continuing with this idea of exclusion, Taylor (1996) found that citizen fear of crime, and fear of loss of exclusion led to reactionary citizen crime prevention initiatives. Returning to South Africa, Lemanski (2006) explores the phenomenon of "improvement districts" in the suburbs, which are citizen-funded security services that fill the role of police in certain neighborhoods. What she found is that rather than address the root causes of crime, these services work more to displace crime into other neighborhoods. The phenomenon of gated suburban communities has also been studied in the United States (Low, 2003), South Africa (Lemanski, 2006), and Brazil (Caldiera, 1996). While gated communities will not be specifically focused on in this study, these gating behaviors reflect a larger suburban trend of exclusion (Davis, 2006, 1998). The challenge with the above research is that while race is addressed, the authors often fail to properly foreground race in their research, with Lemanski and Saff arguing that race is not important in exclusionary practices, arguing that people concerned about things like declining property values are not motivated by

racial fears. However, in his history of segregation, Nightingale (2015) shows how this rhetoric is rooted in racial fears propagated by real estate agents to maintain racial homogeneity in communities. When studying the ways in which crime, the suburbs, and social media connect the most notable study comes from Falkof's (2022) study of a the "I Love Melville" (ILM) Facebook group in the Johannesburg suburb of Melville in South Africa. Through her analysis, she found that there was a distinct form of "white talk," which places emphasis on fear and anxiety from the outside world, but also works to distinguish residents as uniquely good and deserving of their place in the suburbs. As discussed above, as Falkof's research focuses on an open-access group, there remains a gap in the literature focusing specifically on crime discourse on local suburban closed Facebook groups. Additionally, there is a gap in the research focusing specifically on suburban social media discourse. Therefore, this study aims not just to update research on suburban discourse but additionally, provide further insight into suburban Facebook crime discourse.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This dissertation was heavily influenced by four previous studies into the intersection of the suburbs and social media platforms. Those being Eliasoph's (1998) study of the ways in which suburban Americans avoid speaking about politics in community-minded settings, boyd's (2013) research into the social media use of American teenagers, Heiman's (2015) ethnographic study of a New Jersey suburb, and Falkof's (2022) research into South African suburban anxiety on local Facebook groups. These studies will serve as the guideposts through which the theory I base this research on is established. While each has its own critiques which I will be discussing below, they all present unique looks at the populations I aim to study and therefore are invaluable to this research. This section will then, therefore, provide an overview of the theoretical framework of this study, which is primarily focused on the ways in which historical ideological influences found in suburbs serve to constrain and discipline residents of these spaces.

3.1: Public Facing Discourse

Starting with Eliasoph's (1998) book, *Avoiding politics: How Americans create apathy in everyday life*, she aims to better understand how "citizens create contexts for political conversation in everyday life" (pp. 10). Through both interviews and ethnographic work, with suburban Americans, she found that people rarely made space for conversations about politics in public settings, while expressing concerns more eloquently in private situations. She foregrounds her study in public sphere theory, which is a concept that is most connected with the figure of Jurgen Habermas and his 1962 book *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category bourgeois society*, which after its English translation in 1989 gained widespread notoriety. In the book, he explores the concept of the "public sphere" as it occurs during a specific historical moment, in England during the 17th and 18th centuries. In this period, a new class of people began to emerge who existed outside the feudal system, becoming wealthy through early capitalist banking, mercantile, and manufacturing ventures. These individuals or burghers would meet in coffee houses and other public spaces to discuss matters of business and state. Aided by a burgeoning media, and enlightenment ideals of rational discourse, these men would serve to contest the will of the state through their ability to articulate their demands as a group (Peters, 1993). The public sphere, in other words, was a space where private citizens, apart from the state, or the private economy came together as a public to confront the state "as opponents" (Hohendahl

1964 p. 49). As Eliasoph (1998) describes, the public sphere is a "third setting" outside of family and the workplace with three key traits, "participation is optional, potentially open to all, and potentially egalitarian" (pp. 11). Her research seeks to update the public sphere, replacing the London coffee house with the public school gymnasium or the country western bar. What she finds however is that while Americans have a deep desire to engage in social spaces, they invest considerable effort into not speaking about anything politically minded. Through the deployment of different rhetorical methods, Americans work hard to quite literally "avoid politics" in public settings. However, during one-on-one interviews with people she found those same Americans to be surprisingly full of concern and aware of the world. In considering Facebook, and the inherent public-facing nature of the site, this provides a challenge for gauging political conversation. For if middle-class users of Facebook view it as a public space akin to actual public space, then very little explicitly political conversation could be expected to appear on the site.

It is, however, this reliance on public sphere theory that presents an inherent weakness in Eliasoph's research. Since his original writings, the Habermasian concept of the public sphere has come under critique from multiple theoretical positions. Fraser (1990), critiques its neglect of marginalized people, especially women, and Mouffe (2000) for its overemphasis on rational critical debate, the latter of whom this section will focus primarily upon. For Habermas, a healthy public sphere is built on a foundation of rational debate, in which arguments are calmly articulated until both sides reach a unified compromise (Habermas, 1964). However, the concept of the "rational" or rational discourse is inherently exclusive. As Boler and Davis (2018) argue, what has historically been labeled as emotional, or non-rational, has been "emotions anticipated from or attributed to women, people of color, disabled people and other nonnormative subjects," all of which are meant to legitimize their exclusion from the public sphere (pp. 84). Additionally, as Willems (2023) highlights, rationality does not always equate to inherent good, as these so-called "rational thinkers" were able to justify the enslavement of millions of Africans through the slave trade using rational means. Therefore, in using public sphere theory to foreground her research, Eliasoph takes a far too narrow view of public life and discourse. Her study should not be rejected outright and still contains several relevant findings. However, in order to better clarify this, a firmer definition of public discourse must be reached.

Brown (2015) argues that the concept of, "Democracy" is among the most contested and promiscuous terms in our modern political vocabulary." Demos/Kratia, in ancient Greek, meaning "rule by the people," or "people rule," has the advantage of being ambiguous enough that as a term that it can easily be contorted to fit the ideals of whoever uses it (pp. 19). While that may be the case, what remains relevant is the need for "the people" to possess the space to make decisions for themselves. As Couldry et al. (2007) write, in order for public-minded discourse to function, there needs to be a "public connection" (pp. 3). In other words, the people must, to some degree begin to see themselves as more than passive subjects to "the arbitrary will (voluntas) of the prince" (Peters, 1993, pp. 548). Instead, they must, as Dahlgren (2005), writes "come to see themselves as members of and potential participants in societal development" (pp. 158). To understand this development, Dahlgren (2003) uses the frame of "civic culture" which seeks to identify "possibilities of people acting in the role of citizens" (pp. 155). In his conception of "civic culture," the citizen can begin to envision themselves as part of the larger whole, as an individual with agency, who can affect change through cooperation. In developing this concept, he introduced the "Six circuit model of culture," which includes "discussion, values, affinity, knowledge, practices, and identities" and works to serve as a reinforcing and integral part of the process of developing a "civic culture" (Dahlgren 2003). While each component of the circuit is valuable, it is with "discussion" he argues, that the cornerstone is provided for the other dimensions to become "actualized, circulated and reinforced" (pp. 159).

The challenge with discussion as a cornerstone is that it puts us back on the path of rational discourse and toward Habermas. However, Mouffe (2000) presents an alternative, arguing for a space where conflict and antagonism "constitute an ever-present possibility in politics" (pp. 13). Rather than indicating a failure of the public sphere, this "antagonism," as Mouffe calls it is a sign not that democracy has failed, but rather "that it is alive and inhabited by pluralistic viewpoints" (pp. 34). Eliasoph acknowledges this somewhat, writing that a healthy public sphere must be more than just "brains engaged in calm, rational debate" but must also be "physically vigorous […] as laughing bodies with tastes passions and manners" (pp. 12). This argument is supported by Ehrenreich (2007), who argues that one of the primary ways in which humans begin to cohere into organized groups is through communal rituals of celebration and dance. This type of experience allows for the development of, as Mouffe (2000) puts it, a "common symbolic space" (pp. 15). It is through this idea that Eliasoph proves most useful, for as she argues, there is not one specific

way in which behavior in the public sphere must be performed. It is, however, important to view it somewhat as a performance. She does this by introducing the work of Goffman (1959), and his ideas on the performance of the self. Using the metaphor of a theater performance, Goffman argues that people have distinct "frontstage" and "backstage" performances that they enact during their lives during different times, depending on their relationship to the setting they find themselves in. According to him, he writes that,

> To be a given kind of person, then is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social group attaches thereto. (pp. 81)

Therefore, public discourse serves not just the role of exchanging ideas but is also necessary because it serves as a space in which the work of constantly performing one's social position can take place. Within that performance, certain ideas around what is acceptable discussion occur, functioning to remove politics from the conversation in exchange for the continuing stability of the performance. As Eliasoph shows in her observations of a country western bar, the participants there work to create a sense of apathy, choosing to make fun of those who act like they care too much. This behavior is part of their performance of a certain kind of person. However, in referencing Goffman, she shows how this behavior also reflects a deep desire to maintain group continuity, to sacrifice more meaningful conversation in exchange for membership. While Eliasoph can be dismissive of the lack of political talk in public spaces, even the work of engaging in public performance can be crucial in forming and contesting group identities. One more obvious fault within this research is the absence of social media. This research occurred in the late 1990s, before the widespread use of social media, and while there may have been some online communication occurring when Eliasoph's work was conducted, it is certainly not discussed. Therefore, to update this concept, I will utilize the work of boyd (2014) to not just contest some arguments about the public sphere on digital platforms but also to better frame the ensuing discussion about performance online.

3.2: Performance on Social Media

In boyd's (2014) book, *Its complicated: The social lives of networked teens*, she explores the ways in which teenagers engage with one another on Facebook and Myspace, coining the term

"networked publics" to describe the continuity and change found within the public on digital platforms. As touched upon in the literature review, scholars have attempted to apply public sphere theory to the networked public, arguing that Facebook and other digital platforms can serve as a public, or counter-public sphere in which different groups can meet, articulate ideas, and inevitably contest power structures (Jackson et al. 2020). There are some victories that can be attributed to this concept, such as the staging of protests, notably during the Arab Spring of 2011(Castells, 2015), the Black Lives Matter Movement in the United States (Jackson & Welles, 2016), or #RhodesmustFall in South Africa (Bosch, 2016). However, at the same time, these networked spaces have led to the rise of groups such as the alt-right, incels, and Q-anon, which have been able to cause real-world harm (Forberg, 2021; Blommaert, 2018; Nagle, 2017; Phillips, 2015). Both sides of this discussion, however, can risk falling into a form of techno determinism, attributing too much agency to the technology itself while ignoring the structural conditions that created it (boyd and Crawford, 2012). This is where boyd's work proves to be especially useful, for as she argues

> "It is easy to make technology the target of our hopes and anxieties. […] It is much harder to examine broad systematic changes with a critical lens and to place them in historical context than to focus on what is new and disruptive" (2014, pp. 212).

In her interviews with teenagers, she found that social media played a valuable role in allowing young people to communicate with one another and form parts of their identity. For teenagers, different online practices are less connected to a specific political identity or idea, but rather a "particular act of self-presentation" (pp. 44). In other words, networked publics have flaws, yes, but the powers of expression that they enable, allow teens (and all users) to perform, communicate, and create parts of their identity. To return to Goffman, if we can understand the limits of the networked public, and look at discussion online as a form of front-facing public performance, I would argue that this can allow for Facebook groups to be studied as discursive spaces, but more importantly, as spaces in which identity and group formation can be performed but also affirmed, and contested. Returning to Mouffe's "common symbolic space," Facebook can serve as one of the fronts from which suburban communities can perform and reinforce who they are. The work done by boyd does not go further into interrogating what these broader socio-cultural systems are, and therefore in answering her challenge, in order to further understand performance

in the suburbs, I use the work of Heiman (2015), and her study of suburban spaces as a jumping off point into a larger discussion of race, and class in these spaces.

3.3: The Middle Class

Heiman's 2015 book, *Driving after class: Anxious times in an American suburb*, feels especially relevant for this study, for while Eliasoph and boyd both explore people who live in the suburbs, they remain quite nebulous both about the role of the suburbs in the phenomenon they observe, and specifically the role of class. Heiman's ethnography aims to explore both of these issues in more depth. Situated specifically in a New Jersey suburb, her research, involved living and working within the community, spending time with residents socially, but also working as a babysitter for children, and observing municipal town hall proceedings. What she articulates is how the residents of the town she lived in worked, often at great expense to perform certain notions of middle-class life while at the same time faced with shrinking economic prospects, in a concept she termed "rugged entitlement." As touched upon in the literature review, the "middle class," remains a challenging concept to define in explicitly economic terms. Even in social terms, the middle class can be problematized. As Phadi and Ceruti's (2011) study of class in Soweto, South Africa "middle class" can vary based on what people's reference points are. As they argue, a resident in Soweto, who might be termed "lower" class based on income in South Africa, may view themselves as middle class, because they have a more permanent home, and a family member who works full time, compared to those who live in more informal housing and have less formal work. Heiman's work really serves to distinguish the middle class as a specific American historical moment, in which, during the period after World War two, the country needed more university-educated professionals to manage a growing workforce. Thus, privileges were able to be extended to an increasing number of people, allowing them to enjoy considerably more economic privilege than in generations prior. The "professional managerial class" as the Ehrenreich's (1979) term them is a group primarily composed of managers and other educated professionals, who, while not of capital, serve as the frontline for the management of capital interests. This places the middle class, as it is understood, in a precarious position, where they are both often antagonistic to capital interests, but simultaneously placed in a paternal if not wholly oppositional role to the working class (Heiman, 2015). While Heiman does work to articulate a stronger picture of class, both this and the suburbs need to be brought into a clearer global focus.

Essential to this project of class formation in 1940s America, and one of the most important economic privileges granted to this class, was the suburban home. As Ballard (2004) writes, "Our sense of space and sense of self are mutually constitutive" (pp. 51). Therefore, in suburban communities, the residential profile may change over time and geography, but the underlying principles of the space still work to shape and discipline those who live there. The most common origin story of the suburbs comes from Jackson (1987) and Fishman (1985) respectively. According to these authors, as cities in Europe began to expand during the Industrial Revolution, the suburbs were often viewed as areas for the poor, while the wealthy lived and worked in the center of cities, their businesses, and homes often on the same premises. In France and most of continental Europe this pattern was maintained during industrialization, notably in Paris during the "Hausmanization" of the city in which the wealthy claimed large areas of the central city for residences, and pushed the poor to the periphery. In England however, where the modern conception of the suburb truly began to take shape, this pattern was reversed. Influenced by new evangelical Christian ideas of domesticity and closeness with nature, the wealthy middle class began to imitate the estates of the aristocracy, moving into the countryside and commuting into the center city for work. This concept reached its nadir in the United States where aided by the automobile and the post-WW2 economic boom, millions of people were able to move into newly developed "tract" suburbs, thus creating a fundamental shift in the way Americans live (Fishman, 1987; Jackson, 1985). Returning to Heiman, she argues that suburbanization became so interlinked with the "American dream" that it became that dream. In this way, the suburbs moved from becoming merely a physical space and turned into as Durrington (2009) terms it, "a state of mind" (pp. 72). While this certainly relates to the New Jersey suburb studies by Heiman, this concept can be expanded even further back, and allow us to understand the middle-class suburb as having origins that are deeply linked to the colonial capitalist project of Victorian England.

For Fishman (1987) as the title of his book highlights, the project of the suburbs is directly tied to the emergence of a new class of people in England during the 1700s and 1800s, the bourgeois and their efforts to carve out a unique place in society for themselves. In England, during this time, as the processes of capitalism began to increase in speed and scope, the social order began to experience a profound shift (Skeggs, 2011). The traditional feudal roles of peasant and noble began to change, and people experienced a new freedom in which they could have more opportunity to chart their own destinies, but simultaneously less material and ontological security

in their traditional social roles (Brown, 2015). For the Bourgeois, who served as the vanguard for this new society, this created an intense drive to formulate and secure a new identity and place in society, (Archer, 1988). The bourgeois lacked the historical and cultural foundations on which to justify their legitimacy and existence, additionally, their position, unlike the aristocracy, which was in possession of extremely valuable tracts of productive land was extremely tenuous (McClintock, 2013; Fishman, 1987). Middle-class wealth was derived from fragile often highly risky mercantile ventures and speculative investment, there was no guarantee that those who made money once would make it again, and therefore it required constant work and investment to maintain (Graeber, 2012). While the bourgeois could not fully become nobility, through their wealth they could become close. The early suburbs provided a location for this solidification, serving as a "mechanism for accentuating and symbolizing the distinctions of class society" (Davison, 1995 pp. 45). As Fishman (1987) writes, "Insecure in its new status, the bourgeoisie grasped eagerly at the well-established symbolism of the traditional elite". The suburbs served this purpose well allowing the bourgeois to "appropriate the Humanization symbolism" of aristocratic power through their removal from the society of the city (pp. 95). Therefore, it is through this performance of class, that allowed the bourgeois to carve a place out for themselves, namely through consumption such as the purchasing of large homes, wearing certain fashions, and eating certain foods, all this factored into their ability to perform a class position. In this way, despite the different patterns of development that France experienced, its large boulevards offered the same stage for performance, allowing residents to present themselves to the public, dressed in the latest fashions, and eating at the finest cafes (Goffman, 1959).

Returning to Heiman, she depicts a very different, albeit similar middle class, while the boulevards of Paris have been replaced by the manicured lawns and homes of suburban New Jersey. She even remarks on a family who leaves their garage door open with the intention of displaying their brand-new Porsche thus symbolizing their ascension to a certain class status. The time she depicts is an era in which, unlike the post-war boom in prosperity, the middle class is shrinking, and those professions, such as teacher, which in an earlier time was a guarantee of a certain class position become even more tenuous (Ehrenreich, 1990). As neoliberalism shifts ever more wealth up, and the middle class as it was understood 50 years ago becomes ever more tenuous, the importance of the performance of class becomes ever more important (Heiman, 2015). The less stable a foundation one's world is built upon, the more imperative the performance of

one's class becomes (Goffman, 1959). Heiman's research, lacks in two specific points, especially as it relates to the more global formulation of the middle class which this research aims to capture. While she does touch upon race, mentioning the euphemistic ways race is deployed around discussions of school redistricting, but there is less of an effort to examine the ways in which race and class often work together. Additionally, as Davila (2016) writes, Heiman needs to further connect the findings of this study even further to theorization on the global middle class. As discussed above, the middle class represents a distinct moment in American history, but that does not negate its influence, nor its shared socio-political history on the globalized world. This is where Falkof (2022) serves as an essential complement to the above sources, serving to both introduce a global perspective to middle-class theorization, and to help further link together, race class, and crime.

3.4: Race and the Suburbs

In her book *Worrier state: Risk, anxiety, and moral panic in South Africa* (2022), Falkof outlines the ways in which South Africans navigate the anxieties of daily life, specifically as they relate to crime. What this really brings to the fore is how, the suburbs serve as a space in which the middle class works to perform not only their class position, but also the ways in which race serves to work in tandem alongside class to affect this performance which as Falkof (2022) argues is invariably a "performance of whiteness." (pp. 164). As McClintock (2013) writes, "The middle class [bourgeois] had to assert its freedom to create its being from its own self-generating energy." (pp. 95). This project had to serve the dual purpose of justifying their dominant position, as well as serving to generate discipline within their own ranks. According to Van der Westhuizen (2016), using the enlightenment processes of scientific and rational discourse, the bourgeois sought to "naturalize" the dominance of white male adults. This followed a process in which white people claimed ideals such as rationality, hard work, and cleanliness as "inherent to its race." While those who could not create a claim to whiteness were viewed as the antithesis, irrational, lazy, and unclean (p. 5). To naturalize this formation, the middle class relied upon the nuclear family, for as McClintock (2013) notes, if the family structure in which the man dominated over others, was seen as natural, then the logic of superiority could be extended outwards from the family, and into the realms of race and class (pp. 45). As Hardt and Negri write of state sovereignty in their book *Empire* (2001), "Each logical step back functions to solidify the power of sovereignty by

mystifying its basis, that is by resting on the naturalness of the concept" (p. 102). This allowed for the middle class, both in the urban industrial centers of Europe and in the colonies to justify their position to themselves and the world around them. This, however, did not assuage the bourgeoise, for this performance, no matter how convincing did not secure their position in perpetuity.

Returning to McClintock (2013), she argues that the early bourgeois lived with constant anxiety around their loss of position which manifested itself in the form of "boundary panic" (pp. 47). Whether in the colonies or the metropole, the middle class gave a face to their fears of an unfeeling ever-shifting economic system through the idea of the "other." Whether the slave on the plantation or the exploited factory worker, the white middle class was constantly faced with those who could cause them violence. While these anxieties might become manifest through the rhetoric of "cleanliness" or "blood taint," the underlying fear was found in the loss of their labor and position (pp. 113). This created an intense desire for segregation, the suburbs being one of the ways in which this manifested. These segregationist projects, however, were never fully actualized, according to Nightingale (2015), in the long history of segregation of urban spaces, there is always some necessity to keep the lines of separation somewhat porous. Whether for cheap labor, and servants, into wealthy "white" suburbs, or the reverse, as wealthy men in search of pleasure, the lines were never that solid. Additionally, there were always those who were motivated more by money, and were willing to sell property to people of color, in these areas (McClintock, 2013; Nightingale, 2015). Therefore, the middle class still had to contend with a reality where their children were cared for, houses cleaned, and stores run, by the "other." They became in the eyes of the middle class, an "intimate enemy," which needed to be managed (Werbner, 1996 as quoted in Ballard, 2004, pp. 20).

With this background in mind, the findings of Falkof (2022), begin to appear in more clarity, for encoded into the DNA of suburban spaces is the dual desire of the residents both to exclude, but simultaneously prove they should be included. As Foucault wrote in 1977, "the judges of normality are everywhere" (as quoted in Andersen, 2003, pp. 3). In the suburbs, this is especially prominent, for if these spaces could not be entirely sealed off from the world, then there needed to be strict behavioral standards, which serve to mark those who belong and those who do not belong. Additionally, the performance of normality allows for a sense of belonging, despite shifting economic fortunes, and therefore serves to offer stability to residents. While incomes may vary

across suburbs, and the occupation of a suburb is linked to a specific performance of class, which is invariably linked to a "performance of whiteness" (Falkof, 2022, pp. 164). Therefore, to perform "normality" in the suburbs, one must approximate "the habitus of the white bourgeois body" (Ahmed, 2007, pp. 160). This leads us to the conclusion that within the suburbs, race, and class function as ever-present but hidden forces, which work to shape the dynamics present in everyday life. The performances that residents exhibit, whether online or off, are inevitably defined by these forces. In threading together these sources, local Facebook groups emerge as an important tool for suburban middle-class residents to enact the performance of their class and status. Through the everyday conversations on the platform, they can perform their supposed right to the spaces they inhabit.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1: Methodological Justification

In order to best understand the ways in which suburban residents perform on local Facebook groups, I have chosen to perform a critical discourse analysis of posts and comments focusing on crime, and anxiety around crime, from South Africa and New Jersey-based local Facebook groups respectively (Fairclough, 2013). CDA as a methodological practice aims to look beyond the surface-level meanings within discourse and views language as a critical component in the "(re)production of specific social structures and practices" (Schwarze, 2022, pp. 1419). In other words, CDA allows for the ability to look at online discourse not just as a mass of conversations, but also to try and find the commonalities within them, to examine the taken-for-granted assumptions of what is said and not said, and to interrogate these questions in relation to the power structures they produce (Gil, 1996; Andersen, 2003). As Jowett (2015) argues, the internet serves as a site for "cultural contestation of meaning" (pp. 287), meaning that Facebook provides an ideal space to observe this exact phenomenon. Due to the conventions of the networked society, the conversations held online often stick around longer than those had in person, which gives an excellent opportunity to try and capture that which is often more ephemeral (boyd, 2014; Ditchfield & Meredith, 2018). I chose posts related to crime as my focus point for this analysis in concurrence with Falkofs' (2022) observation that talk about crime is "moral and metaphorical as well as practical", and works to "construct identities and enforce social boundaries" (pp. 154). CDA therefore, serves as an ideal method through which to observe Facebook discourse and to deconstruct the meaning behind the discussions.

Oftentimes, when research is conducted via social media platforms, there is a tendency towards "big data" approaches or, collecting large amounts of posts, tweets, or comments and analyzing them quantitatively. However, big data is not always "better data," and there are several shortcomings and challenges of this approach (boyd & Crawford, 2012). Through a big data approach, as conversation and activity online are turned into numbers, the nuance and meanings of a post are often lost or misunderstood. Additionally, as several scholars have pointed out, purpose is not always totally clear on the internet, and what is posted by not always have a direct meaning (Schoon et al. 2020, Philips and Milner, 2018). Therefore, while I may not be able to analyze as much data, through a qualitative approach, the benefit is its ability to understand the

more fine-grained details in Facebook Discourse. Additionally, as this research deals with the ways in which race and class dynamics are reproduced in conversation, the ability of CDA to focus on power relations will prove useful (Jones et al. 2015). Finally, on a more practical note, because this research is dealing with invite-only closed Facebook groups, taking data quantitatively would be nearly impossible, thus making qualitative methods the more effective tool in this scenario.

4.2: Sampling and Data Selection

As Philja (2022) argues, in order to capture a more complete sample of the communities I aim to study, the researcher will need to perform a longer term, observation of the communities to gain an understanding of the community's use of language and its positionality. With both locations, the decision to study them was born primarily from pragmatism. I grew up in New Jersey, and it was through my experiences growing up in the state and using local Facebook groups that I became aware of them in the first place (Gaskell, 2000). Through my master's degree, I had the opportunity to live in Cape Town for the year I conducted the research for this dissertation. Thus, the choice in locations was both a pragmatic choice, but also allowed me to draw inspiration from locations I have lived in and experienced firsthand. Being present in Cape Town, also allowed me to meet people who used and had experiences with local Facebook groups. Oftentimes, local Facebook groups can shift in relevance, and the group which serves as a primary node of discussion one day can shift the next. Therefore, in using local contacts as a starting off point for my sampling enabled me to get a lay of the land in terms of which groups could present possible locations of study.

I was able to identify three groups from each locale in which I was able to take posts. I set the time frame as a two-month period from the 5th of August to the 5th of October 2023. As Castells (2001) argues, due to the ever-changing dynamics of the internet, posts and where people post are always changing, therefore it was important for me to capture a timeframe that was both recent but also large enough to get enough data from. Even during the sampling, I noted posts that had been deleted or in which comments were deleted, leaving an incomplete picture of the discourse as it had initially occurred. In both locations, as will be discussed further in the findings sections, I had to eliminate two groups from my initial sample, as they had in one case turned off commenting on posts, and in the other changed the settings to only allow the buying and selling of items. Using the remaining groups, I then chose to select posts based on two criteria, first that

the post had to have elicited at least ten comments by the time of data collection, and they had to be posts that did not pertain to either advertising an activity or business or involved the buying or selling of anything. Additionally, in line with Falkof's (2022), Facebook research, I also utilized the search feature, allowing for posts to be searched with specific keywords. Using the filter for only posts made in 2023, I used the keywords "crime", "community", "safety", and "children". With these, I was able to gather 15 posts per location. Following Kreis's (2022) approach, once posts were selected, I went into the comments thread and had to ensure that all the nested comments were visible and that the comments were in the correct order. Once this was complete, I took screenshots of the comments and compiled the threads onto PowerPoint slides so that I could print and analyze the hard copies. While I do acknowledge that these constraints may have caused valuable information to be missed, since I was collecting and analyzing all the data on my own in a tight timeframe, I felt that these would best serve to focus my analysis on the most interesting pieces of discourse.

4.3: Research Design and Analysis

Once the posts were collected and organized, they were subjected to a critical discourse analysis (CDA), with the New Jersey and Cape Town posts being then coded for separate, but similar themes (Keisling, 2022). I followed the approach taken by Ahmed (2015), in trying to focus less on the behavior of individuals, and more on the content of the whole and the ways in which different comments, and behaviors interacted with one another to construct a social world. I took an iterative approach, reading the comments many times, before finally working to develop themes, paying attention to the many different things occurring in each thread (Gil, 1996). Throughout this process, I was able to develop several themes for each location, which will be discussed further in the following chapters. Due to the scale of this project, I chose to discuss different themes for the different locations. It is important to note however, that while I have chosen to feature and discuss different themes for New Jersey and Cape Town respectively, this does not detract from the continuity shared between discourse in these two regions. In the final chapter, I will work to further draw out these continuities, while also working to note some of the differences between these two places.

4.4: Ethical Considerations

One of the primary ethical concerns with not just this research, but all research involving digital platforms is the need to respect the privacy of the users who find themselves being analyzed (Zimmer, 2020). Due to the ease with which online spaces can be accessed and observed, it is easy for a researcher to find themselves gathering data, which the user may not consent to have gathered. As boyd (2008) argues, privacy online is not merely about the rules and regulations in place to ensure privacy, it is also about "how people experience their relationship with others and with information" (pp.18). In other words, interactions on Facebook, are not made for a wide audience, but are rather geared toward the user's network of friends and connections on the site (Kreiss, 2022). This project was further complicated by the fact that the groups I was analyzing were private groups, meaning that to access them I needed to apply to be let in, and then approved by the group moderators (Pruchniewska, 2019). For the New Jersey groups, I utilized my preexisting connections to the space and used groups I had already joined for other purposes. For Cape Town, I relied on friends who lived in the suburbs I wanted to study to allow me to access the groups through their personal profiles. While I determined that it would not be feasible to be able to obtain consent from the 1000s of users on each site it was still a concern to me that posts I discussed could be located through the search function on Facebook. However, what works for me in this regard is that because these are closed groups, the searchability of posts is extremely limited. For a person to find the posts and users I discuss they would have to be preexisting members of the groups I researched. Additionally, while Facebook groups do have a search feature it is extremely limited in its scope. I pasted direct quotes from groups into the search feature and Facebook was not able to find the posts in question. Therefore, these existing design features of Facebook, in tandem with the anonymization of all data collected using a "complete disguise" in line with Bruckman's (2002) Ethical Guidelines for Research online I felt that the privacy of users was sufficiently protected. No names of users were given, and the names of the suburbs I studied, as well as any pieces of data that I determined, could be used to locate the groups used were anonymized. Additionally, all research goals were evaluated and approved through the UCT ethical review process.

4.5: Limitations

This study was limited by two primary factors those being, the unreliability and changeable nature of the groups studied, and the second being my own positionality as an American living in Cape Town. The first constraint deals primarily with the changing nature of online spaces. As these groups are all moderated and controlled by local community members, they are often subject to the changing whims of the moderators and users. Some groups may become irrelevant, or more controlling of speech, and thus become less useful to study. For example, one of the groups I was initially looking at in New Jersey changed the rules to allow only buying and selling, and no discussion in their group, thus rendering it useless for the observation of discourse. Similarly, in Cape Town, a group I was recommended by several people who lived in the suburb, had turned off the ability to comment on any posts. While this does problematize data collection and does also mean that oftentimes valuable posts and comments are deleted or changed before I can see them, I took this in stride, instead looking at this as a way to observe the contested and changing nature of discourse within these communities. In other words, asking why a post was deleted rather than just writing it off as unimportant. The second limitation is related to my positionality within this study. As an American, who was born and raised in New Jersey, there may be some taken-for-granted moments in conversation in which I am already too embedded in the ideological formations of the place to properly analyze. On the other side, given my relatively new relationship with South Africa, and Cape Town in particular, there will be discursive practices and comments that I may also miss. Additionally, given the linguistic diversity within South Africa, there are occasions in which I may not be able to understand what is being said, will again miss information.

4.6: Reflexivity

Finally, I think it is important to acknowledge my own positionality from which I write and research I am a white man from the United States performing research that spans across two continents, which will inevitably involve making assumptions about different kinds of people. In a research project which is concerned with whiteness, and the ways it reproduces itself, I must be conscious of my own relationship to the absent center (Dyer, 1997), and work to be reflexive to my own biases and shortcomings. Both countries have histories marked by extreme forms of violence and control, against those who are considered not white (Ballard, 2004, Alexander, 2012). For many, in both the US, South Africa, and around the world, racism is not merely an academic

concept to be understood, but a matter of identity, and of life and death (Ahmed, 2007). As a person who has benefitted from racist systems my entire life, I will try my best to ensure that these experiences are not taken for granted. I want to recognize the marked differences in racial violence experienced in these respective places, while at the same time working not to essentialize the uniqueness of racism, instead working to place it firmly within a global continuity. As we continue to see the effects of colonial racist violence across the world, it is important to recognize that these are not histories but rather active historical processes that still shape the world (Goldberg & Solomos, 2002).

Chapter 5: Cape Town

This chapter is primarily concerned with Cape Town and the themes that emerged from the data gathered from suburban local groups there. As stated above, both locations will feature a discussion of different themes. For this chapter, I will be looking at the content of discourse, specifically, the framing devices deployed by users to make arguments. In Chapter 6 for my analysis of New Jersey groups, I will then work to focus more on the form of Facebook discourse, who is allowed to speak, and what is considered valid speech. For this and the following chapter, I aim to frame the discourse analyzed as a form of frontstage performance (Goffman, 1959). More specifically, I aim to focus on the ways in which this discourse allows residents to portray to other users of the group that they are middle class. I work to frame these ideas with a specific focus on the rhetorical practices identified by Heiman (2015), but also through the performance of the "white racial habitus" as identified by Ahmed (2007). I begin this chapter with a historical overview of South Africa, and Cape Town specifically as it relates to the suburbs, the middle class, and segregation, as well as a brief overview of Cape Town as it stands today, before moving into a discussion of my findings.

5.1: Background Framework

5.1.1: Historical Background

Cape Town, and South Africa in general has been marked by the violent 20th century experience of Apartheid. Defined as the "state of being apart" in Afrikaans, the phrase emerged during the 20s in relation to a desire by white Afrikaners to separate themselves from white English South Africans (Clark & Worger, 2016). During the 30s and 40s, the National Party, under the figures of D.F Malan, and Hendrick Veorword, amongst others, revived the term in conjunction with ideas of the "swart gevaar", or "black danger", stoking fears of the idea that black South Africans would overrun cities, taking jobs and women from Afrikaners (Nightingale, 2015). After the election of 1948 in which the National Party won a slim majority, the party began in earnest to enact the policies which would come to define Apartheid. Through the division of South Africans into different racial categories, and restriction of interaction between these groups, the government committed massive forced removals of black and colored people throughout the country, moving them far from city centers into poorly constructed and densely populated racially segregated

townships. All the while further privileges and housing benefits were extended to white South Africans (Clark and Worger, 2016). Cape Town is unique demographically in South Africa because of its large colored population of Cape Malay, and mixed-race people alongside a smaller minority of English or Afrikaans white people and black residents (Bickford-Smith, 2009). During Apartheid colored residents of the city of Cape Town were forcibly displaced from places like District Six and moved to crowded conditions far from the city center like Mitchells Plain and Delft (Turok, 2001). The suburbs during this period were considered white-only zones, where black and colored people were only allowed to enter for primarily domestic work of cooking, cleaning, and child raising (Falkof, 2022). Many houses also had small, poorly equipped shacks for maids, where they were subject to surveillance and control from white homeowners (Falkof, 2016). While Ginsburg (2011) makes it clear that perfectly homogenous racial areas were never a total reality during apartheid, the suburb still served to allow whites to create an imagined geography within which they could live in some degree of ignorance of the world around them (Ballard, 2004). In this way suburbs in turn performed a similar role to American suburbs, offering white South Africans their aspirational geography, allowing them access to goods and services that a majority of the country was deprived of (Clark & Worger, 2016).

As Nightingale (2015) notes, Apartheid was not the beginning of segregation in South Africa, nor did it happen all at once. Rather, across the country different regions enacted various levels of racial segregation to differing effect. Cape Town also differed from other regions of South Africa because despite engaging in aggressive segregationist policies since its founding, it is often portrayed, as the more "liberal" of South African cities, often masking its policies behind "humanitarian" desires such as preventing the spread of disease during the 1901 plague outbreak. That being said, pass laws requiring people of color to enter the city had been in effect since the early 1800s, and the earliest townships were constructed at Ndabeni to house displaced black residents long before the official beginning of formal apartheid (Nightingale, 2015). What was unique to the Apartheid period was the scale of the displacement, as well as the increasing material wealth the South African government had access to. Much like the New Deal in the United States, Nightingale shows how, through an influx in foreign capital, the government was able to initiate a series of programs aimed at poor whites, expanding access to housing, loans, and jobs. This was such an increase; he continues that by 1958, the standard of living for White South Africans had reached that of the United States. Throughout the 20th century, due to increasing internal resistance,

economic insecurity, and international pressure, the apartheid system collapsed with Nelson Mandela and the ANC sweeping the national elections in 1994. This however did not solve all the challenges of the country, as the long-lasting effects of a century of segregation, as well as new but more camouflaged efforts, still challenge the country to this day (Lemanski, 2006; Ballard, 2004).

5.1.2: Contemporary Cape Town

The legacy of the apartheid system is such that the built environment still enforces a level of racial segregation. As (Turok, 2001) writes, the formerly white-only areas of Cape Town contain around 37 percent of the population and yet have 75 percent of all jobs. This results in huge movements of people from the poorest areas into the wealthiest areas. Cape Town, much like New Jersey, is a "suburban city," with a dispersed network of towns and communities linked through highways (Fishman, 1987). Much of the infrastructure of the city was designed with the Apartheid goals in mind of maintaining segregation, meaning they are used both to facilitate the travel of white residents and exist as physical barriers reinforcing racial color lines (Lemanski 2004). As Ballard (2004) writes, white South Africans employed differing strategies to come to understand their new reality after 1994. One of these was the gating of communities, or as is common in Johannesburg, neighborhoods would place booms across public streets, thus blocking public access (Landman, 2006). While this was not specifically legal in Cape Town, increased mobility of black and colored people into formerly all-white zones generated increased focus on security amongst white residents. The Cape Town of today is a "suburban city of walls," with high levels of perceived crime, leading to neighborhoods in which walls, fences, and gates are a common site (Bickford-Smith, 2009; Lemanski, 2004; Caldeira; 2000). Another common occurrence in Cape Town suburbs is the utilization of Improvement Districts (IDs), which work to supplement the role of the police where residents will pay to support an ID that provides private security services to specific neighborhoods (Lemanski, 2006). Crime in Cape Town still does provide a unique challenge to the city and country, as increasing income disparity has led to increasing rates of both violent and nonviolent crime, thus necessitating citizens to take increased caution in their daily lives (Comaroff, & Comaroff, J. L. 2016). While crime does affect all residents, it is important to note that white, suburban South Africans are much less likely to be affected by crime than poor South Africans of color who live in low-income neighborhoods (Falkof, 2022).

Equally as important to the physical geography of South Africa, are the social implications of the rapid shift which occurred in 1994. With the official end of Apartheid, white people found themselves removed from the formerly dominant position that they occupied. Therefore, they needed to find new ways within which to understand themselves and their relationship to the country (Bremner, 2004). As Ballard (2004) notes, while there were some who attempted to integrate into this new society, many white people chose to continue to segregate themselves, leaving the country, or moving to more ethnically homogenous areas. While not all residents could afford to leave the country or move to a gated community, many developed social methods to enforce racial lines in their existing suburban communities. With the outright racism of the apartheid area no longer accepted, new language was used to conceal racial anxieties and fears. While this will be further explored below, as Lemanski and Saff (2010) argue, in the post-Apartheid, and post-Jim Crow era in America, with overtly racist language no longer acceptable, suburban residents rely on carefully crafted language that avoids, race but still justify exclusion. As Steyn and Foster (2008) call it this form of "white talk" works to allow white residents to distance themselves from the atrocities of the past, while still working to reaffirm the values through which they can impose a "privatized micro apartheid" onto suburban communities (Van Der Westhuizen, 2016, pp. 8). Therefore, as will be shown below, these discourses, which may on the surface focus more on class, are in the same breath racially coded, and work to affirm residents' class, and racial position simultaneously.

5.2: Findings and Discussion

For this chapter, I was able to analyze 15 posts from 2 different Cape Town suburban local Facebook groups with 745 unique comments from 275 different profiles, during the period of October 5th to August 5th with several outliers from September to November 2023. I had initially planned to use a third group but commenting on posts had been turned off by the moderators. During the time of my research, many of the Capetonians I spoke with were quickly able to reference notorious local groups or posts from them. Given this acquired notoriety, I believe that some groups, in an effort to curb these reputations engaged in practices like turning off the ability for users to comment on posts. That being said, the groups I did manage to analyze provided plenty of fruitful data. One of the biggest topics of discussion related to crime came from the presence of people the users felt were "vagrants." This included people who would ask for money or attempt

to sell things on the road or at traffic lights but also referred more generally to people living in tents and other informal settlements, or anyone who appeared to be unhoused. It was a contentious issue with people taking many positions from acceptance and assistance to violence and expulsion, and generated large amounts of disagreement. Generally, users fell into two camps, there were those who advocated a generally accepting charitable attitude, donating money when possible, volunteering with charitable groups, and letting them be. The other camp took a much more hostile attitude, arguing that a hard line needed to be taken, not giving any money, and generally using state or private security forces, and coercive violence to remove them from the area. While these debates will be touched upon, rather than take a specific side, I focus on the taken-for-granted assumptions that both sides deploy in articulating their arguments. It is within assumptions that several key themes emerge, which will be further explored below.

5.2.1: Environmental Paternalism

As discussed above, the unhoused population within the suburbs was a major issue discussed. One example comes from this thread from User A who said this:

> "What if we invited all the regular 'beggars' around [suburb] to form part of a team effort to KEEP [suburb] CLEAN […] it would demonstrate their commitment to, aside from begging [the suburb], and in their spare time, clean up any rubbish from the streets." (User A, Sept. 1)

User A then went on to suggest a form of monthly donation, for these people, and just to generally support them as payment for their work. User A's comment was met with mixed feedback, with some agreeing and sharing resources or other information on similar ideas. However, there was also a substantial amount of disagreement, with User B leaving a comment that offers an example of a common theme used on these sites that I have termed "environmental paternalism":

> "They live in a mess, do you think they care about the mess they create around [suburb]. They have no mercy on the animals they kill the bush meat. They put snares out. They feel FO for the environment. […] Lambaste me if you want. Being good to them will attract them to stay longer. They only stay because people feed them and give them money." (User B, Sept. 1)

This user's comment contains two important sentiments that feed into the concept of "environmental paternalism." One commonality of these discussions was a focus on the natural environment which surrounded the suburbs. Nature and the natural surroundings were an often-

discussed topic, with many users citing it as one of the biggest factors in their desire to live in the suburbs. Harmony and a perceived closeness with the natural environment are two of the key forces of suburban desire (Archer, 1988). Therefore, at the same time, the quality of natural spaces was also frequently brought to focus, with users complaining of litter and waste left in these spaces, as well as the city government's inability to care for these spaces properly. One of the key places in which the environment was cited was in cases like the comment above. This user feels that their suburb should not play host to unhoused people, because they affect the natural environment, not caring for it as they should and killing wild animals. Oftentimes times when users wanted to justify their desire to remove unhoused people from the suburbs, they would often cite environmental degradation as one of the key reasons. As Buscher (2016) argues, in settler colonial societies, natural spaces, work to represent a "dream space" for colonists living there, spaces which they can use to justify exclusion through a supposed entitlement to care for these natural spaces, This is not to say that environmental degradation is not a problem, but that when residents deploy rhetoric connected to the environment, they are using this to justify the exclusion of people of color, who, in their minds, are unwilling or unable to conform to the white standards of social control the suburban space demands (Sibley, 2002)

The latter half of the comment reflects a similar idea, that being kind to the unhoused will only cause more harm. As the logic goes, if unhoused people can expect donations on a certain road, then more will come thus overloading the already fragile system of donations. This rhetoric, calls on individuals to overlook their initial reaction to offer possible assistance to these people and instead ignore them, allowing them to be secure in their justification through this logic. Much like a child or animal, who does not possess the "rational faculties" of an adult, the unhoused person needs this "tough love" in order to properly succeed. As Steyn & Foster (2008) discuss, with the formal end of Apartheid, explicitly racist justifications of exclusion could no longer be deployed, rather white South Africans had to create new rhetorical forms through which to justify the exclusion of people from previously white spaces. Much like the residents in Heiman's (2015) study, who would mask racial anxieties behind the rhetoric of "overcrowding" in local schools, or the "different values" Ballard (2010) found white South African suburban residents citing, these rhetorics allow for residents to both obscure the racial underpinnings in their speech, but also to reinforce the values with which they justify their own sense of belonging. In short, within these "geographies of exclusion" (Sibley, 2022), a focus on assimilation allows white residents to

continue to justify social control, through the deployment of values. This concept, present within residents of suburbs, returns time and time again during these discussions and often serves as a key location to explore the ideological underpinnings of the space. Another example of this sense of "environmental paternalism" was found during a discussion around people who sell cut flowers at traffic lights a user said this:

> "This [suburb] used to be fields of white because of the lilies but sadly that is no more. They are being mass harvested and half of it gets dumped in the gutter by late afternoon. To lazy to get a job – go and talk to them and inform yourself." (User C, Oct. 5)

In the post, the user argues that by patronizing people who sell flowers, you are at once inviting more to the area, and encouraging more environmental destruction. The solution to this problem then, of resisting one's initial desire to offer help, works to flow into the next theme of personal responsibility.

5.2.2: Personal Responsibility

Personal responsibility was frequently discussed and used as a frame in conversations. As will be shown below, this frame can be deployed to justify seemingly different positions and is present across users who appear to take both a more liberal and conservative stance on issues. One post, in which this theme made frequent appearances, came from one of the longer, and seemingly more contentious threads I analyzed, with about 120 comments. In this post, from October 6th, User D made a post expressing their feelings about the state of the suburb. In it, they sent several photos of unhoused people in a public town center area, and made this comment which I have shortened slightly for clarity:

> "I usually let things go over my head but today I need to rant and I know exactly where to direct my complaints. Walking on [public park] today I was treated to the usual trash, drunks and a man defecating. […] Another drunk is consuming alcohol lazing at the [traffic lights] end of [road], opposite the old man in his wheelchair begging. At the [traffic light] we have our one legged regular dancing menacingly at the cars on his crutches." (User D, Oct. 6)

Many users expressed displeasure with User D, taking issue with the posting of people's photos without consent, as well as the general attitude expressed within the post. One user who disagreed with User D made this comment in response:

> "Have heart, I don't think anyone who is privileged enough to live in [suburb] can come close to knowing what it might be like to be homeless, or homeless and in a wheelchair. Go pick up some litter and be part of the change." (User E, Oct. 6)

This comment generated a large number of responses on its own, with users again taking sides to agree or disagree with User E's comment. One comment, in particular, stood out as a representation of how the idea of personal responsibility represents a constant within online discourse in these groups:

> "I started off as a student nurse in Woodstock. Got to [suburb] moved up to [suburb] worked hard moved to [suburb], worked even harder moved to [current suburb] taken me 30 years of hard work paying loads of taxes to live in a clean safe suburb […] so no I don't feel guilty or entitled I have worked hard for it and this is positively disgusting that the suburb is turning into a slum." (User F, Oct. 6)

The key to this post is found in User F's description of "moving up" from Woodstock. While technically a suburb, Woodstock is much closer to the center of Cape Town, and takes on more urban characteristics, as well as being more racially diverse and working class (Joseph, 2014). Therefore, for this user through their years of hard work, they were able to obtain residency in a more affluent suburb, but also more homogenous in terms of race and class. As Durrington (2009) discusses, residents of the suburbs, often feel as if they have "made it" in some sense, "overcoming a number of obstacles in terms of distance, class status, and perhaps even race" to successfully reside in a suburban location (pp. 72). This comment then, reflects this idea that to live in the suburbs, residents feel as if it is not so much a privilege, but is there right, a reward for working hard. Not just working hard in one's job, but also working to discipline one into the suburban lifestyle, to shed one's previous connections and identities to assume a middle-class white identity (Ahmed, 2007). Therefore, in the mind of these users, unhoused people who find themselves in the community, do not work hard, they have not subjected themselves to the same disciplining processes, and are therefore not deserving of the same privileges or any privileges at all. In several other posts, this same logic was applied in different but similar contexts:

> "So where are these kids' parents? Maybe it's time for [suburb] residents to stand together and make [suburb] a safe place for all the residents." (User G, Aug 5)

> "[Unhoused people] refuse to go back to a shelter or back to their community as there are rules and remember one of the rules is cleaning up after yourself, no drugging and so on. Easy – here we can, litter, squat, s?!/:t, urinate no problem." (User H, Oct. 6)

Both posts refer to the need for parents in the former, and unhoused people in the latter, to take responsibility for their own actions. Even more, in the second comment, the user alleges that it is the fault of those people for their situation. It is their laziness or inability to discipline themselves which is the cause of their misfortune, rather than any failing of the state or community. As Linneman (2010) shows in his study of American newspaper reporting on Methamphetamine users, the papers often frame these crimes less as a product of social or economic challenges and more as a personal failing, as an inability for the user to conform to the suburban society's structures. Similarly, as the first comment alludes to with the reference to parents, women are also given an extra burden, not just to control themselves but to control their children. This concept permeates the discourse I analyzed, but it does not always apply simply to exclusion, but also can be used to justify more altruistic goals.

For many users like User E who disagreed with the initial sentiment, they would often argue something about going out on one's own and picking up litter, or providing aid to people in need. While these more altruistic efforts may appear to be at odds with the more conservative posters, they follow the same line of personal responsibility. Much like the user who worked hard to leave Woodstock, the solution to the suburb's problems is found through individual hard work, through getting outside and cleaning the area. As Falkof (2022) found in her study of suburban Facebook, there is a dual desire found online, both the need to exclude, but also the need to be included. This rhetoric of personal responsibility serves this function, as it can be both used to justify exclusion, but also to demonstrate ones deserved inclusion. Within this dual need, the question then remains, why does personal responsibility serve as such a valuable ideological framing within the community? Referring back to theory, a large part of the myth-making around bourgeois identity comes from their own ability to enact self-discipline, to control oneself in the face of temptation (McClintock, 2013). This is compounded within our existing neoliberal moment, a moment defined, by individuality, and personal success. As Brown (2015) writes, when the state abdicates its responsibility to its citizens, one's self-discipline becomes paramount to success. For these suburban residents then, the initial transformation, the movement "up" to the ideal suburb is not enough. Faced with continuing pressures, the resident must constantly perform the work of demonstrating one's commitment to the values of the space (Lemanski & Saff, 2010). This economic and social instability, will be explored further in the following section, in which I show some of the rhetoric deployed in more directly confronting these changing dynamics.

5.2.3: "Rugged Entitlement"

Often within posts, whether it was complaining about unhoused people or the state of public parks, residents would often say they felt as if the government, both at the local and regional level was not helping them at all. Oftentimes they would tag the mayor of Cape Town in comments, asking why they were being ignored. As the below examples show, users would often complain, demanding further government assistance, and then claiming for various reasons that they would not be helped:

> "Where on earth are the well paid ward councillors, the ratepayers assoc, the well paid DA, the mayor of CT, it is not acceptable" (User I, Oct. 6)

> "[user] my opinion might be unpopular but I think it's because [suburb] residents are accepting it. Many residents are too scared to speak up for fear of being ridiculed for living in an upmarket area.' (User J, Nov. 2)

As discussed in previous chapters, the middle-class position is one in which it is felt that the government was designed to provide for you (Greaber, 2017). In the South African context, this is doubly so, as during the decades of apartheid the government was designed entirely to provide for suburban white residents in suburbs like the ones studied here. The above comments show the way in which communities still maintain this point of view, but, as the second comment reflects, a certain level of victimhood. The perception of white victimhood, or the sentiment that white people feel uniquely victimized is common in affluent suburban spaces and is a reflection of these changing economic and political fortunes experienced by these people (Falkof, 2022, Bremner, 2004). This sense of entitlement, however, only captures some of the picture present in these conversations. In Heiman's 2015 work on New Jersey suburbs, she coined the phrase "Rugged Entitlement" to describe the ways in which American suburban residents work to pursue a middle-class lifestyle, while simultaneously dealing with an economic situation in which this lifestyle is becoming more and more untenable. When applying this concept to South Africa, a similar sentiment appears to present itself. As Heiman's term shows, it is not just entitlement, but the "rugged" element that fully encapsulates what is occurring with these discourses.

In large part, what made the Victorian suburban dream easily adaptable to the American social landscape was the longstanding American myth-making around the small-holding farmer. Part of the American mythos is the idea of the farmer, the individual able to provide for one's

family, braving the wild landscapes, and forging one's destiny (Davis, 2006). While the suburban neighborhood is a far stretch from this life, the desire for single, family low-density suburbs, is in part a reflection of this myth (Fishman, 1987; Archer, 1988). Therefore, the suburban resident is expected to possess a certain degree of ruggedness, to make the best of a situation, and to survive life's challenges on one's own. South African white people, as settler colonists themselves possess a similar pastoral sentiment, of their white ancestors making their way in a harsh supposedly empty landscape (Nightingale, 2015). Therefore, coupled with this sense of entitlement, there was also a sentiment expressed, in which South African suburban residents were uniquely equipped to deal with the challenges of maintaining a South African suburban existence. While some of these challenges involved a level of patience or "street smarts" many involved more costly measures such as adding further security measures to homes, investing in neighborhood security services, or even moving to "safer" areas, or as the post below shows, that they are uniquely tolerant of life in South Africa:

> "Don't drive at night unnecessarily. Walking alone in very quiet areas is not advisable. Don't look like a tourist. Keep car doors locked and don't leave valuables in your car" (User K, Sept 20)
>
> "I find living up any steep hill is a good start for less vagrants" (User L, Oct. 1)
>
> "Welcome to South Africa bro, Crack a beer and get jiving" (User M, Oct 1.)

While these comments range, from the practical to the more comedic, what they demonstrate is the sense that in these residents' "rugged entitlement," the ability to deal with worsening conditions is manageable. It is an ever-present reality in the suburbs of Cape Town, as the walls and electric fences that mark the area indicate (Comaroff, & Comaroff, 2016). Posts like this, show how residents still work to reaffirm their values of individualism, hard work, and practicality. These problems are not issues to be addressed through collective solutions, but rather bumps in the road, which as Heiman found in her research merely need to be solved with a bigger car.

5.3: Concluding Remarks

As Falkof (2022), found in her observations of suburban Facebook, there was a dual desire to be both safe, but also altruistic, to exclude, but to also justify one's own inclusion. These themes, when taken in conjunction work to strongly reflect the racialized realities present in Cape Town suburbs, which work to shape discourse in these spaces. Referring to the theoretical framing, whiteness is often defined by its antithesis, if the "other" is lazy, then white people are hardworking

(Van Der Westhuizen, 2016). The suburbs which are deeply implicated in the creation of race, then work as valuable sites to recreate these dynamics. Therefore, when residents define themselves as charitable, hardworking, caretakers of nature, even those who express the more liberal sentiment found in the desire to clean community spaces, they are still reflecting the logics found that reproduce certain suburban ideas around whiteness. It is not then, to say that residents who want to volunteer their time to clean up walking paths are overtly racist, nor does this condone those who express violent intentions towards the unhoused. Rather this chapter works to demonstrate the ideological barriers that exist in these spaces, barriers that work to constrain the possibilities offered by discourse, as residents work to maintain their image within their communities. One of the limitations of this inquiry is that it focuses entirely on the words deployed, rather than the form the conversation takes. Through the New Jersey chapter, I will move a layer back, and focus less on specific ideas discussed, and more on the discussions themselves, and the ways in which residents work to promote certain forms of speech and people as more or less entitled to speak.

Chapter 6: New Jersey

This chapter is primarily concerned with the findings from my analysis of 3 New Jersey local suburban Facebook groups. I was able to analyze 15 posts with 855 unique comments from 202 different profiles, from the period of October 5th to August 5th with several outliers from June to November. For this research, while many themes emerged from the data, I wanted to focus specifically on conversations around how talk online *should* be conducted. In Cape Town, I focused on the content of posts, and while this will still be relevant, for this section I am more specifically interested in comments about discourse. Referring to the theoretical chapter, the observations here are concerned with the ways in which the performance of discourse is contested and affirmed. While I work to problematize the public sphere from a theoretical perspective, as will be seen, ideas around, the rationality and temperament of speech, remain highly relevant to the users below. I will look at how these residents talk about who gets to speak, and how they are expected to speak. I begin the chapter with a historical overview of several United States and New Jersey-specific concepts as they relate to the suburbs, the middle class, and segregation, as well as a brief overview of the state as it stands today, before moving into a discussion of my findings.

6.1: Background Framework

6.1.1: Historical Background

As was discussed in Chapter 3, middle-class suburbs play a particularly important socio-cultural role in the American imagination (Heiman, 2015; Fishman, 1987). New Jersey suburbs are no different, and in fact, serve as a representative example for many of the trends in suburbanization that have affected the country through the 20th and 21st centuries. Picking up where the English bourgeois left off, American suburban development followed a pattern in which wealthy individuals were able to move further and further from the urban core into larger homes on the periphery of cities, which in turn became the first suburban communities (Fishman, 1987). These were further aided by forms of public transportation, with many suburbs forming along new train lines radiating out from the city (Jackson, 1985). With the two major metropolitan centers of New York to the North, and Philadelphia to the south, suburbs have always played a particularly important role in the development of New Jersey, with one of the earliest suburban communities in the United States, Llewyn Park, being constructed in 1857 to service workers from New York

City (Archer, 1988). In addition to New York and Philadelphia, New Jersey is also home to several densely populated cities of its own such as Newark, Paterson, Elizabeth, Trenton, Camden, and Jersey City, all of which gained prominence as industrial centers during the 18th and 19th century (Ortner, 2003). With all these early suburbs constructed before World War 2, not just those in New Jersey but across the United States, it is important to note that these communities were linked to, and relied upon their respective cities (Fishman, 1987). For example, the suburban residents of Newark, would commute and work downtown each day, and return home at night, the city sustained the suburbs, it was the manufacturing, financial, and employment hub, and there would not be one without the other. With the expansion of the highway system and increased consumer access to automobiles, this will begin to change, and along with it the more segregated, and reactionary suburbs of today begin to emerge (Davis, 2006; Jackson, 1985).

During the 1800s, the United States experienced an influx of immigrants from Europe, as well as from China and Japan later in the century, directed mainly into the newly industrializing northern cities (Gerber, 2021). Later in the century, with the end of the Civil War, thousands of newly freed slaves began to move north in search of better economic prospects in what is commonly known as the Great Migration (Alexander, 2012). This along with the influx of European immigrants forced previously unexpected confrontations in the northern United States around race and segregation. As Nightingale (2015) argues, while the very visible Policies American Jim Crow in the Southern United States were horrible, in respect to effectively segregating the population, it was often the more "camouflaged" policies of the 1930s, that have had the more long-lasting and damaging impact. New Jersey alongside the other northern states, never engaged as directly in slavery during the 1800s as the southern states did. Despite not relying on slave labor, the northern states were able to profit directly from slave labor, and it was the northern capital that kept many plantations producing tobacco and cotton (Blackburn, 2013). Much like Cape Town then, New Jersey and the other Northern states were able to take a more "humanitarian approach" to the question of segregation (Alexander, 2012). Similarly, with early immigration into the region, it was concern of disease and sanitation that often masked more insidious goals of segregation.

Throughout the 20th century, as suburban development increased and more Americans were able to move into suburban homes, restrictive real estate covenants would often bar black people

from living in suburban neighborhoods, confining them to cramped inner-city apartments (Rothstein, 2017). Prior to the 1930s, suburban housing in the United States took a distinctively different format from how it is envisioned today. Suburban houses both for builders and sellers as well as buyers were an expensive and risky prospect. Building houses was very expensive, and tedious, requiring many different types of skilled labor, and land ownership. Similarly for prospective buyers, suburban homes were often too expensive, and access to the long-term mortgages most buyers would need was not yet available (Jackson, 1985). The great depression and World War 2 changed this, as the need for both jobs, and housing grew. With the return of thousands of GIs often with children, the United States faced a housing crisis. To combat this, President Roosevelt, and the New Deal administration, created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC). Together, these two organizations worked to ensure that home building and ownership was backed up by the trust and credit of the American government. This induced builders to take larger risks, building the massive developments associated with suburbanization today. This also allowed banks to give out larger and larger loans and enabled home buyers to have secure 30-year mortgages backed by the US government (Jackson, 1985).

To determine the quality and willingness of the loans that could be given, the FHA engaged in a process most commonly referred to as redlining (Rothstein, 2017). In short, the FHA would conduct surveys of neighborhoods, marking them was colored boundaries to indicate their quality. “Redlined” neighborhoods were of the lowest quality, making them undesirable to buy or sell in. This process was explicitly racist, and the FHA would openly state that black neighbors degraded the quality of a neighborhood. Even relatively healthy or middle-class neighborhoods would receive a low designation if black people lived there (Rothstein, 2017; Jackson, 1985). This created a situation in which white people who lived in cities, even those who were working class, were given the ability to leave and purchase suburban homes backed by the trust and credit of the United States Government. Redlining was not the only practice in which cities were hollowed out, the American Roadbuilders Association, and the creation of the interstate highway system, also served to focus on moving people out of cities and into more and more distant suburbs. Those without cars were often unable to even access these areas. Even black people with the means to move were often not able to, as strict real estate covenants would bar them from living in suburban neighborhoods. The Levitts, the builders of the famous Levittown suburban developments, one of

which they constructed in New Jersey in 1958, refused to sell to black people for over two decades (Jackson, 1985).

This period began to alter the fundamental character of cities in New Jersey. As suburbs became more independent of a central city, they became more isolated, more racially homogenous, and in turn more reactionary (Davis, 2006; Jackson, 1985). These communities frequently voted to bar the construction of multi-family homes and engage in other practices designed to bar the poor from access (Rothstein, 2017). All of this signaled a distinct shift in the way that suburbs related to cities. As newly laid highways enabled better connections for people and businesses, the urban cores began to hollow out even faster. No longer did the suburban residents commute into the city, now they would commute to another suburban office park accessed via highway (Fishman, 1987). With the neo-liberalization of the American economy in the 1970s, the cities of New Jersey, which were already experiencing a tax and talent drain began to decline even faster, with thousands of industrial jobs leaving the state (Mansnerus, 1999). Through this period, suburban communities began to distance themselves even from association with urban areas, one notable example from New Jersey that Jackson (1987) highlights is the case of Elmwood Park. Originally called East Paterson, in reference to the city of Paterson, the town changed its name to Elmwood Park to lose its association with the former industrial city and was renamed to reflect a more bucolic, natural setting.

6.1.2: Contemporary New Jersey

The New Jersey of today, with a population of 9 million people, is one of the most densely populated states in the country (Kerney et al., 2022). However, most of the state's "urban" population (94% by some estimates) is concentrated in suburban towns (Cox, 2011). It is, as Mansnerus (1999) calls it "a sad urban presence surrounded by wealth", with some of the richest and safest communities rubbing shoulders with some of the country's poorest (Roper & Jamieson, 2023). In opposite fashion to Cape Town, the poorest communities remain in the inner cities experiencing declining access to employment and social services, while the wealthier suburbs move further and further to the periphery (Halle, 1984; Alexander, 2012). Compared to Cape Town, New Jersey has much lower crime statistics, however, this does somewhat betray the reality, for while on average the state may boast several of the country's safest communities, its cities face continued violence, at the hands of both the police, and its residents (Edwards, 2022; Malinconico,

2022; Cobb 2016). According to the New Jersey Institute for social justice (2022), the state also boasts some of the highest levels of inequality in the entire country. As Davila, (2016) notes, the suburbs of New Jersey have become steadily more diverse, with the suburbs of the 1950s steadily fading away. Therefore, despite a more diverse suburban experience, increasing economic insecurity has made it so some older suburbs, have faced increasing poverty, while newer developments become further isolated.

6.2: Findings and Discussion

The period I selected for analysis was a part of the "campaign season" in the United States, when politicians at the state and local level would begin to campaign for the November 2023 election. Therefore, the groups I analyzed, all featured various discussions related to the local campaigns during the time of analysis. While school board candidates are technically not allowed to campaign with a political party affiliation in New Jersey, many campaigns did implicitly align themselves with either the Democratic or Republican organizations in the community. While there was some discussion of more nationally focused talking points, almost all political discussion was focused on the communities in question. Of the 15 posts analyzed, there were around 20 users who appeared frequently in discussions, given that the two groups analyzed had 4,100, and 2,900, users respectively this does show that a very small fraction of users regularly engage in the groups. As will be discussed in the ensuing section most users commented using what appeared to be a profile that reflected who they were in real life, several posts and comments were made by anonymous users, as well as several instances in which a user would switch to a different account, sometimes a person who appeared to be a spouse or relative. There was one instance in which the user, who was also a group moderator, was using what appeared to be an account designed to obscure their identity, using a profile photo without a person, taking on a name that appeared fake and changed over the course of the time I observed the group. While this was not the specific focus of the study, the moderators of two of the groups took an active role in the groups. The moderator with a seemingly fake account appeared to engage in some form of "trolling" behavior, frequently spamming comments that did not appear relevant, and posting things that seemed intended to inflame users. The other moderator I observed took a less active role but was several times accused of either refusing to approve posts or blocking people associated with the local Democratic party. What this highlights, and will be further extrapolated on in the ensuing section is the question of

what space socially does Facebook occupy in these communities? It is the question that is never truly answered but always touched upon as the following sections show.

6.2.1: Anonymity

Of the 15 posts analyzed, 6 comment threads featured the use of a feature that allows users to post and engage in a group anonymously. According to Facebook, "in order to ensure that conversations move freely" the anonymous post feature was introduced with the intention for people to share opinions without having them be attached to their personal account (Facebook.com/help). Of the 6 posts all of them were started by anonymous members, the profile name replaced by the name "anonymous member" and the profile picture replaced by a grey cartoon face with the outline of a cap and glasses. Each post the anonymous members engaged with appeared to be intentionally inflammatory, and related to the upcoming local elections. An example of what would be shared is something like this:

> "[Democratic school board candidates] want to use the threat of reporting educational professionals and students who celebrate and teach about Martin Luther King Day and Veterans Day, but not celebrate sexual behaviors as "discrimination" to the attorney general? Do these candidates not believe a parent has a right to know if their child is presenting as a different gender or species (yes species) at school? This is the path they want to take our school district." (anonymous user N, Sept. 22)

With the use of the anonymous post feature, and almost enhanced by the profile image, the user of this post is attempting to convey that they are sharing some form of "hidden truth," knowledge that they would be punished for sharing publicly. The above post was much longer than the segment I chose to share, but it ended with an explicit endorsement of the Republican slate of candidates. In all the posts shared it appeared that the poster generally agreed with national republican talking points and would frequently share similar moral panic ideas around schools and the teaching of sex education (Romano, 2022). Each time these anonymous posts occurred there were often those who would take issue with it, asking why things should be posted anonymously, or accusing the user of sharing not with good intentions but rather with the purpose of provoking others or simply to be a troll:

> "why post anonymous? If you're so passionate why hide? Because YOU would be that definition of woke! No accountability and hiding behind an anonymous post […] and this post just shows you trying to spread all the pathetic hate in your heart," (User O, Sept. 22)

> "I'm going to place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the moderator of this group. Anonymous trolls should be banned from groups like this. Pure trolling, nothing more" (User P, Sept 22.)

"Trolling," and "Trolls," can be a challenging phenomenon to define, but is generally understood as aggressive behavior with the intent to upset, anger, or cause harm for comedic affect (Phillips, 2015). In other words, a troll does not stand by the meaning of their comment, only that it might cause outrage. While the idea of inflammatory commenting will be explored further below, the comment from User 2, about "groups like this" highlights my focus on anonymity in local groups. To extrapolate, this user feels as if in a local group anonymous posting has no place, and therefore, a user who wishes to share in the group should have to reveal their identities to the community. This topic of one's identity, and how one is expected to represent oneself online is frequently up for debate. As Goffman (1959) writes, within institutional bounds, such as the workplace or community, there are certain rules of performance, and how one can and should act in each space in relation to other people. In the suburbs, which place a heavy emphasis on the traditional family structure, there are certain institutional relationships that are expected to be maintained (Halle, 1984). Additionally, there is an often assumption that people are expected to know one another and that everyone is expected to conform to certain middle-class standards of behavior (Archer, 1988). Anonymity upsets this position, for it enables the already fragile subject positions of the users online to become even less certain. As will be shown below, users spend a considerable amount of energy restating and arguing for their position, so when the suburb moves into an online space and those bounds become less clear, insecurity can emerge.

This sentiment was not held by everyone, however, with one story frequently being brought up about a community member who was allegedly punished for that they posted online. This person, who also appeared to be a user of the group, ran for a school board position, and during the period the person ran, another user found a post they made on twitter in which they spoke very disparagingly about education, calling college "brainwashing." The user who made the Twitter comments alleged that:

> "These people put me through pure hell! For months on end. The mob that came after me was truly disgusting. Twisting my words to make me look like an ass! For what?? […] To hurt me financially. There is no defending their action and all the other people that went along with this." (User Q, Oct. 24)

In this case, user Q alleged that the statements they made online were used as justification to punish them materially offline, and therefore anonymity is important to allow someone to protect their livelihood and still be able to post their opinions. While this user generally seemed to support Republican candidates during the election, users affiliated with both parties would jump between this line of supporting, in some cases and condemning anonymity in others. While I do not aim to take a side in this debate, I want to explore this contradiction between anonymity as trolling, and as necessary in the community. As Ehrenreich (2007) outlines, in many different settings throughout history, most notably the early medieval European carnival, masks, costumes, and other forms of concealment were used to hide one's social status, allowing peasants to mock the nobility, without fear of reprisal. Therefore, it is not without precedent for anonymity to be deployed in the leveling of a critique against something. Even in the online world, many different groups have taken the anonymous mantle, to do both good and bad (Philips, 2015). While a precedent for this exists, there is still the feeling that one should have to be open in their expressing their opinions. This exposes two elements that connect back to public sphere theory. The first being that conversation must follow a logical rational pattern, with no space for more playful forms of communication, and the second is that there is a distinction between the public domain of conversation and that these two things should not follow one another (Hauser, 1998). As Habermas argues, the public sphere is a distinct space, separate from politics, the economy, and private life, however, these groups stand to show the failures of this theorization, as residents attempt to bring together many different debates, contesting the political, the private and economic within the groups. As Fraser (1990) argues in her revision of the theory, the bourgeois public sphere constantly works to contest and block broader participation, with this process being evidenced here as different users contest and debate what can be spoken about. Much like the normative ideals of the public sphere one can enter the coffee house, and debate anything, these users relying upon these same ideals, but perhaps by different names feel as if the political should not affect one's standing. As mentioned at the start of the section, the other challenge with the anonymous posts was the sense that these posts were meant intentionally to inflame and upset others. This association will be further explored in the following section.

6.2.2: Identity and the Right to Speak

In discussions on the groups, oftentimes accusations were leveled at users that they did not have a right to comment or involve themselves because they were not from town. As the example below shows, a user who attempted to spread the sex education moral panic rhetoric was countered by a user who said:

> "[user] This is not the town, honey. You don't live here, you don't get to spread hate here." (User R, 22nd Sept).

From the same thread, similar rhetoric was used with users claiming that a person was off base in an argument or did not have the right to speak because they were not from town:

> "I don't know of him even though I have lived here for over 20 years. [User] has some real anger control issues." (user S, 22nd Sept)

> "[user], maybe its time for you and [user] to actually visit [town]" (User T, 22nd sept)

As all these examples show, there is a general sentiment that users who speak in these groups must be from the community in question. This same logic is that taken a step further in the below post, where a user stakes a claim to the validity of their argument based on their family's involvement in community institutions of the town:

> "[…] my father was chairman of the [community recreational sports program] for 34 years before his passing. He coached, officiated, etc. My mom coached field hockey at [local school]. Both my parents were loved and respected. I have coached [town sports], been the VP of [local school's parent-teacher organization], volunteer on the ambulance auxiliary, etc. My fiancé coaches for the [local football team] and is a volunteer fireman in our community. […] Again I ask what have you contributed besides negatively attacking people?" (User U, Oct. 5).

As this post shows, User U not only works to demonstrate that they are long-term community members by referring to their parents, but they also list a number of activities they have been involved in, challenging the validity of the other user's comment based on their perceived lack of involvement within the community. Some users would even accuse others of having no right to speak on Facebook as they have not attended any school board or town council meetings and therefore have no right to involve themselves. It is within this last example that the apparent reasoning behind these types of comments truly emerges. For within all these comments, users make a clear point to indicate things they have done, but never the content of the events.

With the meetings this becomes most clear, for in these posts users almost never speak on the content of the meetings, merely they state they were there. In this way, it is less important online for these users to relay information learned than to state what they have done. What does this work then function to do for Facebook users, what does the reiteration of one's commitment to the community do for these users? Connecting this to the previous chapter, these users through this talk are again working to justify their position within the suburb. Returning again to Falkof's (2022) observation of the need to be seen as good. These posts however take this a step further, for they then use this high ground to limit what can be spoken about. This rhetoric, in the varying forms it takes, was always used to then limit what others could say, or challenge a user's right to speak. In this way then, goodness is equated to the right to speak. Eliasoph (1998), made the observation that for the communities she observed oftentimes, action was perceived as more important than speech, which people felt often just got in the way. As with both this section and the previous one, the question remains as to why these residents fight so hard to limit online speech, to narrow, what is considered valid. Through the final section, I aim to further elaborate upon this question, through looking at what users accuse others of doing through posts.

6.2.3: "Stirring the pot"

As the title of this section betrays, a phrase that often occurred in these conversations was "stirring the pot." As the post below shows, users would frequently use this to accuse other users of bringing up issues or problems that they felt were just being used to cause conflict:

> "This seems like a post aimed at separating our community. And stirring a pot that needs no stirring" (User V, Sept. 18)

> "Intended or not this post was designed to inflame and sow divide within the community" (User W, Nov 1.)

This refrain was heard in comments supporting both sides of the political aisle, but was also used in less overtly political situations such as a user who made a post complaining about a driver he felt was going too fast on a specific road. In response to this, users accused him of needlessly causing controversy, asking why he chose to post online rather than confronting the driver directly or going to the police. While this phrase, works well to highlight the central focus of this theme, there were many other ways in which users would claim that a certain style of post or comment was unnecessary of should not be spoken about in public. In another example, a post was made about the local grocery store being overpriced, and several users began to talk about

alternative stores with better selection and price. One user who joined this thread made sure to clarify that they were not "jumping on the bandwagon" of hating local stores. For this user, even though they were also engaging with the post, they needed to still register the fact that they possessed a loyalty to local stores, and would not needlessly slander them online. The grocery store in question was not a "local" store in any sense, but rather a national chain that was seemingly out of touch with what people in the town wanted or could afford, and there was little by way of a method to communicate these needs to a large corporation. As with some of the comments made in the anonymity section, users were very conscious and aware of trying to appear divisive and were quick to accuse others of the same. Another frequent refrain made was to accuse a user of being overly focused or passionate about an argument. After an aggressive back and forth a user might say something like this to end a conversation:

> "In all seriousness you need a hobby – fly-fishing, mini ship building, etc. Something other than over analyzing [local political candidate]. I'm worried for you [user]." (User X, Nov. 1)

All of this presents a contradictory feeling in these groups, wherein users will post about politics, argue, debate, and disagree but before long they themselves or others will pull back, and often shame one another in the process. All of this works to reflect a complete aversion to the "antagonism" that Mouffe (2000) argues is such a key component of a healthy public discourse. Without making a reference to Habermas, these users often work to reproduce or the same dynamics described in his concept. Time, place, content, and emotion all must be limited for fear of being labeled a troublemaker, even being overly invested in discussion falls into the same trap. What this reflects again returns to Eliasoph's observations about political talk, as these users will go to great lengths to avoid or distance themselves from these conversations. As Eliasoph writes, when residents she observed did not engage in tough conversations, "they kept their enormous, overflowing reservoir of concern, empathy, compassion, and altruism, out of circulation, limiting its contribution to the common good" (p. 63)". When these users step back from the brink, they are limiting themselves and the conversations they can attempt to have, thus limiting the potential to change what they do not like. Suburbs, as was discussed above as "aspirational geographies," are spaces in which ideological baggage is expected to be shed, to be transformed. As Fishman (1987) showed, early suburbs allowed the British bourgeois to leave cities behind, and along with them the conflict, of living alongside the exploited other in an industrializing society. As Sara Ahmed (2007) argues "whiteness is invisible and unmarked, as the absent center […] invisible for

those who inhabit it, or those who get so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it, even when they are not it." (pp. 157). Therefore, it is within this absent space that suburban residents find themselves, alienated from a world of conflict, and for many decades possessing the material advantages to avoid it (Heiman, 2015). What these posts show, is the process in which cracks begin to form in these spaces, as residents begin to realize that rather than an absent but united block of people, they are in turn a community in conflict.

6.3: Concluding Remarks

What all these themes work to show is the uncertainty with which users of these groups navigate engaging online. As all social group performance does, knowing one's position within a space is important for the understanding of the role one is expected to take. In returning to Heiman's concept of rugged entitlement, as the physical spaces of the suburbs become more uncertain, it is only natural that within this, online spaces will become so as well. Facebook, with its solipsistic focus on one's own profile, and what the user wants to see, makes it challenging online to envision a community (Phillips, 2015). Therefore, these users rely on the only tools they possess, which is the ability to constantly reaffirm one's status within the group, and work to maintain some form of perceived civility, for who knows what the intent behind a post is. In the same way that the users in the previous chapter use their opinions on issues to affirm their class position, this same work is being conducted here, although through different means. Given this instability, Eliasoph's observations still hold firm in this new context, as users online work to define the thin line of acceptable speech, always working to ensure that it is not crossed, often at the expense of genuine conversation about the world around them. However, as we begin to see through the conflict online, while it makes residents uncomfortable, it does show that these spaces to provide a platform for which antagonism can take place.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

Through this final chapter, I primarily will to draw together the connections found within these two locations and draw several conclusions as to what this means for global theorization on the middle class. Very importantly as well, I will note the differences I observed between these places, which will demonstrate that, while there are global connections, theory cannot be a blanket applied universally across places. I will then conclude with a brief discussion of future study recommendations, as well as some final remarks.

7.1: Connections of Place

The observation which began this research was the fact that in both New Jersey and Cape Town, in middle-class suburban communities, relatively sheltered and affluent people tended to grasp onto moral panics to make sense of the anxieties they are exposed to in modern life. Through this research, and my initial observations I was struck by how this pattern manifested itself on Facebook groups, with the commonalities in rhetoric and discourse so similar that I elected to discuss different themes for each location in order to expand my overall findings. With that being said, while some commonalities have been noted in the previous chapters, I want to show them here more directly:

Environmental paternalism (5.2.1) and personal responsibility (5.2.2) in New Jersey:

> "busloads of illegals overcrowding cities do not respect [suburb's] fragile environment or its special character" (User Y, Aug. 5)

> "I'm up at 4:30, on the road by 5:15. Start time for 6:50. I mean, a nice soft landing everyday would be wonderful, but a successful life is a disciplined one" (User Z, Oct. 1)

Right to speak (6.2.2) and "stirring the pot" (6.2.3) in Cape Town:

> "But you don't live in the area and are happy to shout from the soapbox to feel sorry for these vagrants" (User AA, Oct 6.)

> "[User] lets try to find you a hobby. Do you like watercolor painting? Maybe juggling? Maybe origami?" (User AB, Oct 6.)

To briefly break these down, we see User Y, citing the "fragile environment" of the town as a reason to not allow too many people from urban areas to move in. Then, in arguing as to why school children should have to wake up earlier, User Z cites success through personal

discipline as a reason why this is needed. Shifting to Cape Town we see User AA, accusing another user of not being in the area, and thus not having a right to speak on a given issue, and User AB shaming another user for being too involved, using the exact same hobby rhetoric as User X did in section 6.2.3.

As the above examples show, these discursive frameworks appear again and again within the Facebook groups studied. To further elaborate on why this is, it must first be acknowledged that one primary commonality shared across these places is, of course, Facebook. The logic being that the networked conventions of the site as they stand, are such that the same discourses are reproduced across multiple locations. This may be, in part, true, as networked flows of information allow for behavior online to take on similar traits and functions (Castells, 2013). While this may offer a partial answer to these shared commonalities, even if these two places are borrowing and taking inspiration from one another's discourses, there still needs to be a reason as to why these two places are able to interpolate themselves into one another's ideological frameworks. In short, why would a South African resident relate to what someone an ocean away is posting online? This is where the historical commonalities of these places take precedence. As colonial states, both linked to the British empire, these places did share in global flows of segregationist rhetoric. Their encounters with the Other, while different, did also necessitate a response, and it was through global networks of trade and colonial violence that these places learned from one another (Nightingale, 2015; McClintock, 2013). Therefore, while their suburbs may take different shapes physically, both were inspired by a combination of rugged frontier, and bourgeois domestic ideals around what a family and community should be. Then, as the 20th century moved into the 21st, these suburbs, experienced the profound shifts that occurred through both increased economic insecurities caused by neoliberal policies, but also by their shifting relationships to race (Brown, 2015; Falkof, 2022). What this has led to is a situation in which these compounding layers of ideological baggage have worked to shape and transform these spaces, not with one single moment, but over the course of centuries. It is the power imbedded within these locations that subsequent generations of suburban residents enter, and are transformed themselves by these places. One important difference in these places is that during the 1990s, both locations experienced profound economic changes, but it was in South Africa with the end of formal apartheid in 1994 that an even larger confrontation occurred within white South African's understanding of themselves. Therefore, the in order to more fully appreciate the

similarities found between these places, I will move through a discussion of the differences observed, and the potential implications within this.

7.2: Differences of Place

When engaging with a project like this one which is global in its scale, it is important to thread a balance of honoring differences while also avoiding the essentialization of a given place (Wang, 2011). Therefore, to truly understand the similarities found in this research it is important to also understand what is different. South Africa and the United States, first and foremost had different experiences of the 20th and 21st centuries. While both began as colonies on the fringes of the British empire, the United States rose to become a global hegemon, with the capacity to affect the material conditions of millions of people worldwide. South Africa, on the other hand, has faced a 21st century in which they have been confronted by increasing material shortages, and a weakening economy, caused almost directly by the United States (Klein, 2007). As this research has shown, many in the United States, do feel the effects of the constricting global economy, but the sheer size of the American economy has insulated many from the worst effects (Heiman, 2015). South Africa on the other hand, has much more directly been confronted with its own positionality. Since the end of Apartheid, South Africans have not only faced a profound shift in their understanding of themselves, but the country has faced worsening infrastructure and employment situation exemplified by the periodic blackouts caused by the country's failing power grid (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2016). While this does disproportionately affect the poorest in society, as Falkof (2022), points out, even the wealthy still must drive on potentially dangerous roads, and make decisions related to basic safety more often than their counterparts in the United States.

This was reflected in the posts I analyzed, as South African users spent far more time comparing themselves to European and other Global North countries. Frequently a user would cite a place like the UK, to argue that it was better, worse, or the same as compared to South Africa. While they could not agree on where they stood in relation to these places, their need to compare stood in stark contrast with the American users who at no point ever mentioned another country. The New Jersey users did compare, but it was much more likely to be in relation to other towns in the state, which the South African users did as well in relation to other suburbs. This need to compare to other countries reflected a conflicting sentiment within South African

users to understand their positionality. This reflects the complex and contradictory nature of the middle class as a concept, for how can these users locate themselves globally when they exist occupying a space in which they are affluent and privileged, yet exist on a global scale exist in much more precarity? This awareness and conflict in relation to their position left users in a much more uncertain situation as to how they understand themselves and one another. For New Jersey users there were much less question in who they were and the underlying institutions that supported their lifestyle.

Additionally, the situation in South Africa, in which users felt the need to invest more in their physical safety, created more dialogue around practical realities that one had to face. While both groups relied on moral panic language, and misconceptions around crime, such as the refrain from Cape Town that homeless people did not want to help themselves, the New Jersey groups were much more likely to focus on more openly moral panic language. For example, crimes such as robbery, mugging, and carjacking were frequently discussed in Cape Town, but in New Jersey, one of the largest "crime discussions" occurred when a woman claimed that schools were secretly allowing children to change gender without telling their parents. Stories like these were never able to be corroborated, and were always false, with users borrowing these talking points from right-wing news sources (Kingkade et al. 2022). Americans are generally more materially safe but still feel the effects of events like Covid, and the financial crisis. It is this combination of a degree of material security and lack of control that leads them to these more ethereal concerns. Therefore, while the users from both countries felt a sense of victimization at the hands of various folk devils, the South African users embodied the sentiment found in rugged entitlement even more so than the American users, choosing to protect themselves with walls, big cars, and private security,

7.3: Recommendations for future study

Given the constraints on time and finances through which this research was conducted, there were several other avenues of study that could have been pursued through this data. While I did take note of the number of commenters, and of those who did comment most frequently, I did not pay close attention to the likes and other reactions given to posts. It would be interesting to observe the overlap between these two actions and see if those who like posts are generally the same who comment. On a similar note, to properly expand, and understand the suburban users'

relationship to local groups, one would need to conduct interviews in conjunction with CDA, for as (Sipley, 2020) argues, on Facebook passive participation is very common, and many users' experiences and ideas are being missed by just focusing on the posts themselves (Jenkins, Itō, & boyd, 2016). In addition, pursuing a more multimodal approach to data analysis, engaging more directly with memes, emojis, photos, and links could prove to be useful (Ditchfield and Meredith, 2015).

7.4: Final Remarks

What this study has worked to demonstrate is that due to common shared historical linkages to colonialism and thus to whiteness and class, local suburban Facebook groups in New Jersey and Cape Town engage in similar discursive practices through which they enact and reinforce their class position. Through this performance on Facebook, local groups serve as a site in which middle-class ideals of individualism, personal responsibility, and rational discourse can be reproduced. In addition, through these same channels, the groups function to reproduce ideas of whiteness and its superiority. While more overt racism is not present in these groups, the discourse enables users to deploy different frameworks, such as "environmental paternalism" to conceal racist discourse. In summary, the behavior I was able to observe online took a rather conservative restricted form. This is not to say that Facebook or social media platforms are the cause of this, but rather they serve to reproduce the dynamics found and created offline, but moved online.

This prognosis can feel rather frustrating, as a researcher, having to observe the oftentimes shocking discourse online can be challenging and at times outright upsetting. Even more so can be observing the way in which these users come close to genuine political discourse, and yet remain so unable to engage in a constructive way. However, it is important to remember that this attitude reflects almost too much hope in social media or rather too much hope in its function as a public sphere. As has been reiterated several times within this dissertation, social media cannot serve that function, nor does it. What it can do is offer a space for performance, a space for users to engage in play, to express themselves. To end on a more positive note then, while they do not always reach the desired conclusion, it is that very ability to choose to engage, to involve oneself, to perform, which offers the greatest chance for something greater.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Cape Town Facebook Posts

Section	Date	Original Post
5.2.1 Environmental Paternalism	September 1st	"Hello [Facebook group] Family! A couple of weeks ago I posted about [unhoused person] who stands at the intersection of [road] & [road]. Today happens to be his birthday (Thanks [user] for sharing this information with us!) and as such I stopped by to chat with him. He had a great idea which I wanted to run by you all. What if we invited all the regular 'beggars' around [suburb] to form part of a team effort to KEEP [suburb] CLEAN. They could all wear the same t-shirt with that slogan and it would demonstrate their commitment to, aside from begging at the robots in their spare time, clean up any rubbish from the streets. [Unhoused person] and some of the other guys know who the 'regulars' are, ie those who keep coming back. This close group of individuals could in turn be rewarded for their efforts in form of a weekly guaranteed contribution, e.g. R 150 which would be collected through online fundraising happening mainly on this group. So, if you don't feel comfortable giving money at the robots, we would invite you to sponsor their efforts through this fund and based on what you feel comfortable giving. Any excess money could to towards throwing them an end-of-year party or something similar. It could also be wonderful to somehow get [Improvement District] involved in this initiative. Thoughts?"
		"It's all good and well. They live in a mess do you think they care about the mess they create around [suburb]. They have no mercy on the animals they kill the bush meat. They put snares out. They feel FO for the environment. They just want to know where their next fix comes from. Lambaste me if you want. Being good to them will attract to stay longer. They only stay because people feed them and give them money"
	October 5th	"[User] this valley used to be fields of white because of the lilies but sadly that is no more. They are being mass harvested and half of it gets dumped in the gutter by late afternoon. To lazy to get a job – go and talk to them and inform yourself. Wait till they spit at you through your open window because you won't buy a bunch. Yes really."
5.2.2 Personal Responsibility	October 6th	"Welcome to [suburb]? I usually let things go over my head but today I need to rant and I know exactly where to direct my complaints. Walking on [public park] this morning I was treated to the usual trash, drunks and a man defecating. There is a portable toilet in the car park at [shopping center]. Another drunk still consuming alcohol lazing at the robots end of [road], opposite the old man in his wheelchair begging. At the [road] robots we have our one legged regular dancing menacingly at the cars on his crutches.

		The taxi rank by [shopping center] is littered with 'all sorts'. Somebody must be responsible for this utter shambles in our beautiful [suburb]." [accompanied by photos of people in the public park]
		"This is the state of the world we live in. We are apart of this mess. The sooner we stop separating ourselves from the larger picture the less entitled we will feel to post pictures of people who are literally experiencing a world of challenge that we cannot comprehend. And the more we separate from it the worse it will get. Have a heart. I don't think anyone who is privileged enough to live in [suburb] can come close to knowing what it might be like to be homeless, or homeless in a wheelchair. Go pick up some litter, be a part of change."
		"[User] a lot is precious about it . I started off as a student nurse in Woodstock. Got to [suburb] moved up to [suburb] worked hard moved to [suburb], worked even harder moved to [current suburb] taken me 30 years of hard work paying loads of taxes to live in a clean safe suburb . Pay huge amounts in rates and taxes so no I don't feel guilty or entitled I have worked hard for it and this is positively disgusting [emoji] that the suburb is turning into a slum."
		"[User] they do. They refuse to go back to a shelter or back to their community as there are rules and remember one of the rules is cleaning up after yourself, no drugging and so on. Easy – here we can, litter, squat, s?!/:t, urinate no problem."
	August 5th	"So where are these kids' parents? Maybe it's time for [suburb] residents to stand together and make [suburb] a safe place for all the residents. Might be a good time for the mothers to speak up … can't imagine living in fear day after day. My heart goes out to all the innocent residents, stay safe."
5.2.3 "Rugged Entitlement"	October 6th	"Where on earth are the well paid ward councillors, the ratepayers assoc, the well paid DA, the mayor of CT, it is not acceptable"
	November 2nd	"[user] my opinion might be unpopular but I think it's because [suburb] residents are accepting it. Many residents are too scared to speak up for fear of being ridiculed for living in an upmarket area. I'm on a [different suburb] group and residents seem to get behind one another on these issues and homelessness etc is dealt with in a structured manner, plus their ward councillor is SUPER proactive."
	September 20th	"Don't drive at night unnecessarily. Walking alone in very quite areas is not advisable. Don't look like a tourist. Keep car doors locked and don't leave valuables in your car"
	October 1st.	"I live on the mountainside in [suburb]. I find living up any hill is usually a good start for less vagrants. My fire danger is still a problem, but our helicopters respond quickly with water from [reservoir]. I have lived in [different neighborhoods in Cape Town city], and I definitely prefer a steep hill. The traffic cops seem more vigilant in other suburbs as well. [Suburb] taxi rank is constantly monitored by law enforcement."
		"Welcome to South Africa bro, Crack a beer and get jiving"
7.2 Connections of Place	October 6th	"[User] then go clean up their mess. But you don't live in the area and are happy to shout from the soapbox to feel sorry for these vagrants but imagine one urinating every day on your property and leaving litter everywhere. Honestly such BS you'd tolerate that"
		"[User] lets try to find you a hobby. Do you like watercolor painting? Maybe juggling? Maybe origami [emoji]"

Appendix 2: New Jersey Facebook Posts

Section	Date	Original Post
5.2.1 Environmental Paternalism	September 1st	"Hello [Facebook group] Family! A couple of weeks ago I posted about [unhoused person] who stands at the intersection of [road] & [road]. Today happens to be his birthday (Thanks [user] for sharing this information with us!) and as such I stopped by to chat with him. He had a great idea which I wanted to run by you all. What if we invited all the regular 'beggars' around [suburb] to form part of a team effort to KEEP [suburb] CLEAN. They could all wear the same t-shirt with that slogan and it would demonstrate their commitment to, aside from begging at the robots in their spare time, clean up any rubbish from the streets. [Unhoused person] and some of the other guys know who the 'regulars' are, ie those who keep coming back. This close group of individuals could in turn be rewarded for their efforts in form of a weekly guaranteed contribution, e.g. R 150 which would be collected through online fundraising happening mainly on this group. So, if you don't feel comfortable giving money at the robots, we would invite you to sponsor their efforts through this fund and based on what you feel comfortable giving. Any excess money could to towards throwing them an end-of-year party or something similar. It could also be wonderful to somehow get [Improvement District] involved in this initiative. Thoughts?"
		"It's all good and well. They live in a mess do you think they care about the mess they create around [suburb]. They have no mercy on the animals they kill the bush meat. They put snares out. They feel FO for the environment. They just want to know where their next fix comes from. Lambaste me if you want. Being good to them will attract to stay longer. They only stay because people feed them and give them money"
	October 5th	"[User] this valley used to be fields of white because of the lilies but sadly that is no more. They are being mass harvested and half of it gets dumped in the gutter by late afternoon. To lazy to get a job – go and talk to them and inform yourself. Wait till they spit at you through your open window because you won't buy a bunch. Yes really."
5.2.2 Personal Responsibility	October 6th	"Welcome to [suburb]? I usually let things go over my head but today I need to rant and I know exactly where to direct my complaints. Walking on [public park] this morning I was treated to the usual trash, drunks and a man defecating. There is a portable toilet in the car park at [shopping center]. Another drunk still consuming alcohol lazing at the robots end of [road], opposite the old man in his wheelchair begging. At the [road] robots we have our one legged regular dancing menacingly at the cars on his crutches. The taxi rank by [shopping center] is littered with 'all sorts'. Somebody must be responsible for this utter shambles in our beautiful [suburb]."

		[accompanied by photos of people in the public park]
		"This is the state of the world we live in. We are apart of this mess. The sooner we stop separating ourselves from the larger picture the less entitled we will feel to post pictures of people who are literally experiencing a world of challenge that we cannot comprehend. And the more we separate from it the worse it will get. Have a heart. I don't think anyone who is privileged enough to live in [suburb] can come close to knowing what it might be like to be homeless, or homeless in a wheelchair. Go pick up some litter, be a part of change."
		"[User] a lot is precious about it . I started off as a student nurse in Woodstock. Got to [suburb] moved up to [suburb] worked hard moved to [suburb], worked even harder moved to [current suburb] taken me 30 years of hard work paying loads of taxes to live in a clean safe suburb . Pay huge amounts in rates and taxes so no I don't feel guilty or entitled I have worked hard for it and this is positively disgusting [emoji] that the suburb is turning into a slum."
		"[User] they do. They refuse to go back to a shelter or back to their community as there are rules and remember one of the rules is cleaning up after yourself, no drugging and so on. Easy – here we can, litter, squat, s?!/:t, urinate no problem."
	August 5th	"So where are these kids' parents? Maybe it's time for [suburb] residents to stand together and make [suburb] a safe place for all the residents. Might be a good time for the mothers to speak up … can't imagine living in fear day after day. My heart goes out to all the innocent residents, stay safe."
5.2.3 "Rugged Entitlement"	October 6th	"Where on earth are the well paid ward councillors, the ratepayers assoc, the well paid DA, the mayor of CT, it is not acceptable"
	November 2nd	"[user] my opinion might be unpopular but I think it's because [suburb] residents are accepting it. Many residents are too scared to speak up for fear of being ridiculed for living in an upmarket area. I'm on a [different suburb] group and residents seem to get behind one another on these issues and homelessness etc is dealt with in a structured manner, plus their ward councillor is SUPER proactive."
	September 20th	"Don't drive at night unnecessarily. Walking alone in very quite areas is not advisable. Don't look like a tourist. Keep car doors locked and don't leave valuables in your car"
	October 1st.	"I live on the mountainside in [suburb]. I find living up any hill is usually a good start for less vagrants. My fire danger is still a problem, but our helicopters respond quickly with water from [reservoir]. I have lived in [different neighborhoods in Cape Town city], and I definitely prefer a steep hill. The traffic cops seem more vigilant in other suburbs as well. [Suburb] taxi rank is constantly monitored by law enforcement."
		"Welcome to South Africa bro, Crack a beer and get jiving"
7.2 Connections of Place	October 6th	"[User] then go clean up their mess. But you don't live in the area and are happy to shout from the soapbox to feel sorry for these vagrants but imagine one urinating every day on your property and leaving litter everywhere. Honestly such BS you'd tolerate that"
		"[User] lets try to find you a hobby. Do you like watercolor painting? Maybe juggling? Maybe origami [emoji]"

Section	**Date**	**Original Post**
6.2.1 Anonymity	September 22nd	"Does Phil Murphy's [New Jersey governor] school board slate in [suburb], [Democratic school board candidates] want to use the threat of reporting educational professionals and students who celebrate and teach about Martin Luther King Day and Veterans Day, but not celebrate sexual behaviors as "discrimination" to the attorney general? Do these candidates not believe a parent has a right to know if their child is presenting as a different gender or species (yes species) at school? This is the path they want to

		take our school district. Thankfully [Republican school board candidates] is focusing on students and their academics and preparing them for high school and not woke ideology."
		"why post anonymous? If you're so passionate why hide? Because YOU would be that definition of 'woke'! No accountability and hiding behind an anonymous post. Now if you want to stop being a coward I'd love to entertain and educated conversation for someone who supports certain things on both sides. But misery loves company. And this post just shows you trying to spread all the pathetic hate in your heart. I pray god brings your poor little soul some peace."
		"I'm going to place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the moderator of this group. Anonymous trolls should be banned from groups like this. Pure trolling, nothing more"
	October 24th	"I don't want to hear it! These people put me through pure hell! For months on end. The mob that came after me was truly disgusting. Twisting my words to make me look like an ass! For what?? [User] has never used my business!! So what exactly was the point of [their] post? To hurt me financially. There is no defending their action and all the other people that went along with this. I did not start this but now people are getting upset when they get a taste of their own medicine? I refuse the be the Democrats punching bag!"
6.2.2 Identity and the Right to Speak	September 22nd	"[User] This is not the town, honey. You don't live here, you don't get to spread hate here."
		"Wow… I just received the most obnoxious message from this individual [User]. [User] no, dear. It's inquisitive, not sarcastic. Feel free to crawl back under that rock you came out from. We were fine without your nosy body getting involved. I don't know of him even though I have lived here for over 20 years. [User] has some real anger control issues."
		"[User], maybe its time for you and [User] to actually visit [suburb]"
	October 5th	"[User] I would not typically dignify this with a response, but I'm going to. I've never met you nor spoken to you. I've lived here my entire life. To say that council members don't care about the residents is hurtful and extremely unfair and that is why you are getting a response. May I ask what you are your family have contributed to our community to make such allegations of others? my father was chairman of the [community recreational sports program] for 34 years before his passing. He coached, officiated, etc. My mom coached field hockey at [local school]. Both my parents were loved and respected. I have coached [town sports], been the VP of [local school's parent teacher organization], volunteer on the ambulance auxiliary, etc. My fiancé coaches for the [local football team] and is a volunteer fireman in our community. The current council members that I'm honored to serve with all have similar resumes. Again, I ask what have you contributed besides negatively attacking people you've never met or conversed with? You constantly bash our great community. Do we have challenges? Yes, every community does. However, to say the leadership doesn't care is definitely offensive. If you'd ever like to meet me or speak to me I'm always happy to hear from all residents."
6.2.3 "Stirring the Pot"	September 18th	"My comments are: 1. Why post anonymously? 2. This is [User's] side – there are always 3 sides to every story 3. Its unclear what he is talking about for those of us who don't know This seems like a post aimed at separating our community. And stirring a pot that needs no stirring. Is that what you were hoping to accomplish? (That's rhetorical)"

	November 1st	"First off, objectively speaking here – you post anonymously and making an accusation with a text post with no sources. Intended or not, this post is designed to inflame and sow divide within the community."
		"In all seriousness, you need a hobby – fly fishing, mini ship building, etc. Something other than over analyzing cardboard [Halloween] decorations in hopes that [suburb politician] will take you under [their] wing. I'm worried for you, [User]"
7.2 Connections of Place	August 5th	"busloads of illegals overcrowding cities do not respect [suburb's] fragile environment or its special character"
	October 1st	"[User] it is? I'm up at 4:30, on the road by 5:15. Start time for 6:50. I mean, a nice soft landing every day would be wonderful, but a successful life is a disciplined one. I work 7-3, 3-11 and 11-7. When I have to be there, I'm there. Does it suck sometimes? Sure."