J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting – A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract
The Parkland School Shooting in February 2018 caused a flood of empathy, grief, and anger on Twitter. Having gained popularity and a reputation for her political commentary on US American events on the social media platform, the British author J. K. Rowling published a variety of intriguing tweets following and regarding the Shooting. The purpose of this study is to characterise Rowling’s tweets, to relate them to the discursive Twitter practice, and to look for correspondences with the concept of celebrity advocacy. To do so, this thesis offers an adaption of critical discourse analysis in order to examine the structures, meanings, and stances behind Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Shooting. To grasp the underlying ideologies and motives, theory of discourse, representation, celebrity advocacy, spectatorship of suffering, and othering is consulted. The study brings to light that Rowling’s tweets are characterized by dialogue, exploitation of voices, othering, and discursive constructions of distance and proximity. Moreover, the findings stress Rowling’s tweets in the light of self-presentation and performance of altruism. Ultimately, the study reveals that Rowling’s tweets exhibit a highly mediated form of celebrity advocacy empowered by the practical circumstances of Twitter as social media platform.

Keywords: J. K. Rowling, Celebrity Twitter Practice, Critical Discourse Analysis, Celebrity Advocacy, Parkland School Shooting
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1. Introduction

With over 330 million monthly users, Twitter is one of today’s biggest, most popular social media platforms in the world (Aslam 2018). Its real time functions enable non-stop global communication and interaction. As users turn to Twitter in all life situations, endless expressions of empathy, grief, and anger from all over the world flooded the platform when the news of the Parkland School Shooting in Florida broke. Tragedies like the Shooting often spark political discussions and activism on Twitter because social media use seems to have become a coping mechanism for public trauma. Like many other celebrities, J. K. Rowling published a variety of tweets following and regarding the Shooting. Famous for her Harry Potter novels, the British author has also gained a reputation for her political commentary on US American issues and events on Twitter. What makes Rowling an especially intriguing subject of interest is her subtle style of writing on the platform (be it attributed to her profession as an author or not). I am particularly interested in Rowling’s tweets because the situational and practical context of their production and consumption is versatile and complex. Rowling caught my interest on Twitter in relation to the Parkland School Shooting with her first tweet following the event. This tweet appeared like a re-tweet at first, while I realized later and on a closer look that Rowling actually posted a screenshot of another user’s tweet and commented on it. This ‘false re-tweet’ and the issues it raises with regards to its content (that provoked a heated debate in the comment section), urge me to investigate a series of her tweets in relation to the Shooting.

The aim of my thesis is to critically approach Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting in order to uncover their structures, meanings, and stances. With this study, I want to answer the lack of qualitative Twitter research in the field of media and communication studies. At the same time, the study intends to present a junction of several scholarly interests such as discourse in social media, Rowling’s authorship, Twitter after tragedy, and celebrity Twitter practice.

To do so, I conduct a critical discourse analysis. Drawing from Fairclough’s model (1995a, 1995b), I design a study of multi-modal, problem-centred, and exploratory nature. Pairing critical discourse analysis with Twitter research, it is necessary to highlight the role of text on the platform and introduce Twitter as a location for discourse. Text
has a special significance on Twitter because the user relates to it in two roles. On the one hand, the user engages in the role of a text producer, authoring tweets and posting them on his/her feed. On the other hand, the user engages in the role of text consumer, reading, liking, or sharing other users’ tweets on their feed and in public discussions. This makes tweets an adequate subject to critical discourse analysis because it underlines the textual and interactive essence of Twitter. Simultaneously, this highlights Twitter as a location for discourse because the platform constitutes language and meaning in mediated format.

My study is inspired by two conceptual discussions: Spectatorship of Suffering (Chouliaraki, 2006a; Mortensen and Trenz, 2016) and Celebrity Advocacy (Brockington and Henson, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2012; Kapoor, 2012; Yrjölä, 2012, 2014). In the thesis I aim to transfer and stretch out their scope within qualitative social media research because I attribute them a high relevance for the investigation of tweets following tragedy and crisis.

Guided by three research questions, I characterise Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting, contextualize, and relate the findings to the discursive Twitter practice. Finally, I look for correspondences with the concept of celebrity advocacy.

- **RQ1:** What characterizes the tweets of J. K. Rowling following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting in Florida?

- **RQ2:** How do the characteristics of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting relate to the discursive practice of Twitter?

- **RQ3:** How do the characteristics of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting correspond with the sociocultural practice of celebrity advocacy?

Besides contributing to the referred research interests, I hope to make a methodological contribution to media and communication studies by presenting an adaption of Fair-
clough’s model of critical discourse analysis for the study of tweets. I attempt to advertise the applicability of the method within qualitative Twitter research.

Following this introduction, I contextualize the research problem before establishing a theoretical framework for the analysis that simultaneously serves as outline for the literature review. After reviewing interdisciplinary research around the interest of the study, I attend to methodology. I present the sample and the method of the study, describing the adaption of the analytical model and conduct. This part includes methodological and ethical reflections. Thereafter, I analyse the data and discuss the findings from the previously established theoretical and conceptual perspectives. The thesis finishes with a summarizing and reflecting conclusion.

2. Background
This chapter serves to contextualize the research problem in relation to the circumstances of its occurrence. It progresses from a description of the situational context, the Parkland School Shooting, to the introduction of the broader context, touching upon political, historical, and societal issues relevant to grasp the realm of the study.

2.1 The Parkland School Shooting
The Parkland School Shooting and its aftermath are the immediate situational contexts of this study. On the 14th of February 2018 a former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida killed seventeen people during a shooting rampage at the school (Luscombe et al., 2018). The 19-year old gunman was armed with a semi-automatic rifle which he had legally bought and had in his possession for a year (Herrera, 2018). He was reported to the police numerous times due to concerns about mental health, violence, and explicit plans about an attack in his school previous to the Shooting but no actions were taken (Devine and Pagliery, 2018).

The Parkland School Shooting sparked a new push to the debate on gun control in the United States of America (Alter and Chan, 2018; Ebbs, 2018). While critics of America’s gun mentality called for stricter gun control, the ban of certain types of guns and magazines, and regular background checks, supporters took the stands and defended
current regulations. In the debate, the former group was characterised by student activists, the latter by patrons of the National Rifle Association (NRA) (ibid.).

Following a number of national protests and walk-outs, the gun control movement peaked at the “March for Our Lives” on March 24th 2018 with thousands of protesters marching all over the world (Laughland and Beckett, 2018).

2.2 Twitter and Parkland
Besides receiving worldwide attention on traditional media, the Parkland School Shooting and the following gun control debate was subject to a great amount of social media communication. Twitter played a major role in the broadcast and discussion of the Shooting. Hours after the tragedy, many celebrities utilized the platform to express their condolences and shock. Later, tweets about the shooting transformed into messages of activist character, with many public figures demanding political actions (Chuba, 2018). A group of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students who started the hashtag (#” used to mark content on Twitter) #NeverAgain along with their efforts to affect a gun law reform account that Twitter was crucial to the fast and wide reach of their campaign (Alter and Chan, 2018). During the marches and protests on March 24th 2018, the hashtags #MarchForOurLives, #NeverAgain, and #GunControlNow on Twitter spiked with overall more than two million mentions on the platform (Zaczkiewicz, 2018). It is argued that to some extend this incredible reach can be attributed to the Twitter engagement of celebrities (ibid.). Resulting from the intense discussions, and organization and broadcasts of activism on the platform, Twitter can be understood as the arena of Parkland’s aftermath.

2.3 J. K. Rowling
Joanne Kathleen Rowling is a British author famous for her series of fantasy novels telling the story of a wizard named Harry Potter (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). As the theoretical framework of my study will be concerned with theory about celebrities, it is important to characterise Rowling’s status as a public figure. Rojek proposes three types of celebrity “as the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere”, “ascribed, achieved, and attributed” (2001, p. 17). Fitting for Rowling is the status of achieved celebrity. This status is used for people that are perceived
“as individuals who possess rare talents or skills” (ibid., p. 18). Rowling achieved fame because her first novel was a great success on the British book market in 1997. Since then, her books have been published and sold more than 500 million times internationally and she is celebrated for her authorship (Pottermore, 2018).

Besides her career as an author and playwright, Rowling co-founded a charity called “Lumos” in 2006 (Lumos Foundation, 2018). The foundation aims to transform childcare and make support available for families in need, in order to end the need for orphanages. Additionally, Rowling supports several charities, acting in the role of president and ambassador (ibid.).

2.4 Rowling on Twitter

Rowling is a very active Twitter user with over 14 million followers (April 2018). Since joining the platform in August of 2009, the author has published close to ten thousand tweets (Twitter.com/jk_rowling).

“Rowling has built up a reputation as somewhat of a Twitter guru over the years, using the platform for everything from critiquing President Donald Trump’s response to the London Bridge terror attack to commemorating the anniversary of the Battle of Hogwarts.” (McCluskey, 2017)

Like McCluskey describes above, Rowling’s participation in especially US American political discussions and her unique style of tweeting have made her a central figure of interest and attention on Twitter.

Practically, Rowling’s Twitter feed is dominated by re-tweets. Only rarely, she publishes original tweets without drawing from any textual or visual reference. Additionally, her Twitter feed reveals that she merely initiates interaction or communication because her tweets are mostly reactions and responses to pre-existing tweets.

Thematically, Rowling’s Twitter feed is usually dominated by her charity “Lumos”. The organisation has its own Twitter profile (Twitter.com/lumos), publishing content about its projects, which Rowling re-tweets. Besides, Rowling frequently engages with content around her profession as an author and playwright, and the world of Harry Potter.
Most importantly, Rowling’s twitter feed is characterised by a potpourri of social and political topics (such as the Brexit\(^1\), Holocaust remembrance\(^2\), and the US American elections\(^3\)). Not only is the thematic mixture peculiar, but the inconsistency of moods and attitudes towards the topics characterises her Twitter feed as hilariously inappropriate\(^4\) at times, and other times as angry, rectifying and lecturing\(^5\). Looking for a pattern of events and discussions that Rowling usually responds to, it can be observed that her participation follows the headlines of world politics, while she mostly focuses on issues of concern for Great Britain and the United States of America.

Rowling’s Twitter practice is accompanied by a variety of scandals and criticism. Other Twitter users and communities (e.g. Native American, LGBTQ) have addressed issues around Rowling on the platform. In March 2016, Rowling received major criticism on Twitter for utilizing Native American beliefs in a fantasy piece she published on her Harry Potter website (Horton 2016). In March 2018, she was subject to heavy criticism when she liked a transphobic tweet, which people then related to an issue in her newest wizard movie (Percival 2018). The scandals highlight two important aspects for this study. Firstly, the consequential discussion of the issues taking place on Twitter, Rowling’s outlet, emphasizes the enormous attention for her on the platform. And secondly, the raised concerns promote taking critical perspectives on Rowling’s tweets because her participation in social and political discourse comes with ideological implications.

Contextualizing Rowling’s reputation and her particular practice of Twitter motivates this study because it teases the collateral controversy of her tweets. Sparked by Rowling’s intriguing first tweet following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting, the analysis of her tweets in relation to the Shooting promises complex revelations and valuable impressions of her famous feed.

### 2.5 Great Britain and the USA

Rowling’s Twitter responses to the Parkland School Shooting, and her countless comments on US American political issues on the platform, require a contextualization of

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1. e.g. https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/989490540696821760
2. e.g. https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/957712088784363522
3. e.g. https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/965316470271102982
4. e.g. https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/987360664896360450
5. e.g. https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/986624639983063040
the relationship between Great Britain and the USA because she is from England and engages in US American discussions. In the seventeenth century, England founded several colonies at the east coast of North America, exploiting, and oppressing native culture and practices (Ellis, 2009; Magdoff et al., 1998). English colonialism in North America ended when the colonies formed the United States of America after a war for independence in 1783 (Magdoff et al., 1998).

Following the independence of the United States of America, the relationship between the two nations has been complicated, at times characterised by rivalry, other times by loyalty and partnership (Ellis, 2009). While their political and ideological relationship is complex, the profound, emotional bond between the USA and Great Britain proves to be long lasting. Especially their shared language promotes this bond (ibid.). Today, it is observable that both nations fight their own social and political battles (Niblet, 2007).

In this contextualization of Anglo-American relationship, one issue is not to dismiss: the notion of “Americanization as Cultural Imperialism” in the 1950s and 60s (Malchow, 2014). While during the colonization the British were pushing their culture on North American society, the British now felt threatened by the broadcast of American popular culture (ibid.).

These issues highlight the alternating dominance between the two nations. It goes to show that the strains in the relationship between the two nations are not only of political character but also plays a crucial role in their cultural, societal contact.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter serves to define the theoretical base and to accumulate the conceptual tools for this study. The presented theories and concepts will be operationalized in the analysis to locate and relate Rowling’s tweets in and to the relevant discussions. Additionally, the theoretical framework serves as outline for an interdisciplinary literature review following this chapter.

The theoretical framework establishes understandings from several thematic perspectives. First, the theoretical implications of the method are discussed because critical
discourse analysis is loaded with paradigmatic comprehensions. Secondly, theory of representation is attended to because it connects theoretical considerations of critical discourse analysis to the practical aspects of Twitter. Thirdly, concepts and theories of celebrity advocacy, spectatorship of suffering, and othering are introduced because they present ideological, political, personal, communicative indicators of interest in order to analyse Rowling’s tweets.

3.1 Discourse and Text
Researhing with the means of a critical discourse analysis, it needs to be recognized that the method comes with its own theoretical implications. Utilizing Fairclough’s model of analysis for this research, I acknowledge that his understanding of discourse combines two perspectives:

“One is predominant in language studies: discourse as action and social interaction, people interacting together in real social situations. The other is dominant in post-structuralist social theory (e.g. in the work of Foucault): a discourse as a social construction of reality, a form of knowledge.” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 18)

Fairclough’s fusion of these two comprehensions of discourse is highly relevant for my research because both can be related to the practice of social media. The former is compatible with this study because the essence of social media practice can be considered social interaction. The latter is compatible with this study because within social media, users produce meanings and representations, essentially constructing a reality.

Drawing from Fairclough’s perspective, I consider discourse on social media to constitute itself within the production and consumption of user-generated content, mainly being text. For my study it is additionally important to regard discourse as constructive, reactive, and dialogic in character because these facets shape interaction and communication on Twitter.

As text is one of the main objects of research in my study, a concept of text within discourse needs to be presented. Especially compatible with this research is the post-structuralist approach to discourse, understanding texts as “constructions that relay and relate ‘Self’ and its many relations to ‘Others’” (Pickering, 2008, p. 153). This is of particular interest for this research because the practice of social media is regarded to be
strongly connected to notions of self-representation, perception of, and interaction with ‘the other’ (Deuze, 2015; Lopato, 2015). Relating this perspective to one of the two main comprehensions of discourse according to Fairclough, text can be understood as record of social interaction. As a result, text as an object of this study is also understood as a construction and relation of identities.

It is important that this comprehension of text is compatible with Halliday’s principles of text analysis because his tools will later be consulted for the analysis on linguistic level. Halliday argues that texts can be regarded as the entry way for the examination of a communicative phenomenon (1994), subsequently suggesting a similar perspective.

### 3.2 Representation

Consulting Hall’s theory, the idea of representation can be linked to the previously established understandings of discourse and text. Hall argues that every act of communication through language contains indications about “how you ‘make sense of’ the world of people, objects and events, and how you are able to express a complex thought about those things to other people [...].” (Hall, 1997, p. 16). His observation is important for my analysis because it incorporates the constructive and dialogic character of sense making and communication similar to the idea of discourse. Hall’s point of view is also able to justify the attempt of analysing Twitter texts as constructions and relations of identities.

Moreover, the theoretical thematic of representation is relevant to my study due to Twitter’s practical nature. On Twitter, users produce and consume virtual forms of representation. Hall points out the cultural differences in production, reception, and organisation of meaning through representation (Hall, 1997). Applied to the social media platform, Hall’s emphasis enables the problematization of global communication on Twitter. The problematization of communication between and about different cultures relates closely to the phenomenon at hand and is further discussed in chapter 3.5 Othering.

In addition, discussing the practical nature of Twitter from theoretical perspectives of representation is important because it highlights a performative notion of the practice. An essential subject of representation on Twitter is the user because participation on
Twitter requires a personal profile. Information (name and picture) from this profile is directly linked to all interaction on the platform. Therefore, Twitter as a social medium functions partially as a platform for self-presentation (Bouvier, 2015; Deuze, 2015).

Building on Goffman’s take on self-presentation, Hogan argues that social media is the stage to performances of social interaction aiming to impress fellow users (Hogan, 2010). Goffman looks at self-presentation, emphasizing a notion of theatricality (Goffman, 1956). This notion of theatricality can be related to notions of celebrity advocacy discussed below. Moreover, Hogan’s perspective stresses social media practice to constitute performative strategies because the production of representations is in the hands of the represented.

3.3 Celebrity Advocacy

I adapt the term of celebrity advocacy from Chouliaraki’s research (2012) for my analysis of Rowling’s tweets following the Parkland School Shooting. The term describes activities and efforts of famous individuals engaging in public humanitarian and political discussions, promoting charities, expressing solidarity, and appealing for change. Preparing for the analysis, I gather theories about motives and symptoms of the phenomenon in order to access Rowling’s tweets from this perspective.

Critically approached by most scholars, celebrity advocacy is considered a sociocultural, communicative practice of self-presentation rather than humanitarian activism (Chouliaraki, 2012; Kapoor, 2012; Yrjölä, 2012, 2014). An indicator of celebrity advocacy is the performance of an ideal persona, concerned with the suffering of others (ibid.). Characteristically, this staged ideal persona strives to battle misery and speak for (distant) sufferers (ibid.). Often times, ‘the other’ is exploited for their story and used for performing an altruistic celebrity self (ibid.). Therefore, inevitably, theoretical considerations about celebrity advocacy are concerned with structural and ideological patterns that resonate in orientalist, colonialist, imperialist, capitalist, and post-democratic discourses (Brockington and Henson, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2012; Kapoor, 2012; Yrjölä, 2012, 2014).

Symptomatically, an active double positioning takes place within activities of celebrity advocacy (Chouliaraki, 2012). Firstly, the celebrity positions themself in regard to the
subject of solidarity (possibly by othering). Secondly, the celebrity positions themselves in regard to their audience (e.g. as a mediator, witness, ambassador, or role model) (ibid.). The former is subject to my textual analysis of Rowling’s tweets. Typologies of the latter drafted by Chouliaraki and Kapoor offer comparisons and inspiration for the practical and sociocultural discussion of them.

A common motive of celebrity advocacy is the amplification of a cause. This motive relies on the idea that celebrities provide the “necessary symbolic capital” (Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 2) to be heard and believed by society. The motive is enhanced by the transfer of the rather political, humanitarian discourse into, presumably easily accessible, discourses of entertainment (Kapoor, 2012). Today, in addition to the “significant access to the halls of power, and the ability to galvanize publicity on a global scale” (ibid., p. 18), social media equips celebrities with highly autonomous tools for the amplification of cause. This factor can be taken advantage of in my analysis because Twitter quantifies and displays the amplification on the platform, making the audience, reactions and interactions of Rowling’s tweets observable.

The considerations around celebrity advocacy help to establish a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon as a societal structure, strategy, and communicative event concerned with issues of ideology, power, and representation. They also highlight that a contextualization of the event is indispensable because celebrity advocacy is a highly political matter.

3.4 Spectatorship of Suffering

The central claim of the term for my study is that social media practice highlights spectatorship of suffering as means of self-presentation. This claim is developed through the following discussion: Tragedy and disaster are events with massive audiences on television and social media (Chouliaraki, 2006a; Mortensen and Trenz, 2016). In contrast to institutionalised media production of television, social media platforms enable the audience to express reactions publicly and comment in the same format. Therefore, social media contributes to a much more active and immediate participation of society in political discussions, bearing increasingly responsive spectators of suffering (Mortensen and Trenz, 2016). Most importantly, the nature of social media adds a second level of spectatorship to the broadcast of suffering, as the spectator becomes spectated upon hi-
/herself by displaying his/her engagement in respective communication on the platforms (ibid.). As a result, spectatorship of suffering becomes a performative issue like celebrity advocacy. Together, the two concepts draft a network of indicators and reflections of ideological and communicative structures that allow to examine Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting for related characteristics.

For this study spectatorship of suffering means that by interacting with content related to the Shooting, Rowling does not only display her spectatorship but subsequently becomes recipient of attention. She contributes to the broadcast and distribution of content reporting and discussing the Shooting on Twitter, drawing attention to herself. Mortensen and Trenz offer a typology of spectators, presenting textual and practical characteristics, and hypotheses for the analysis of Rowling’s tweets.

3.5 Othering

As touched upon in chapter 3.1 Discourse and Text, this study examines texts as records of interaction and constructions of identity. One way these records of interaction and constructions of identity connect is that the former are characterised by the latter. Subsequently, an analysis of the texts requires an investigation of these constructions. Involved in celebrity advocacy and spectatorship of suffering, othering is a central theory to the analysis.

‘The other’ is a matter of representation and fundamental to social interaction as its existence provides the means for social communication (Emig and Lindner, 2010; Lopato, 2015). As much as ‘the other’ is needed, it also brings upon dangerous constructions and assumptions, and “a tendency to fix the qualities of the supposed Other as permanent or indeed essential” (Emig and Lindner, 2010, p. viii). Moreover, it is argued that “Othering is the division of the world into in (-group) and out (-group), into us and them” (Rana, 2011, p. 46). This division is made by certain criteria (ibid.). In this sense, othering can be understood as a way of objectifying, labelling, and grouping individuals for the sake of constructing and locating the ‘self’ in communication and allocating power relations. Within a post-structuralist understanding of discourse and its analysis, this also implies to regard othering as a mechanism of sense making. For my analysis, othering not only needs to be understood in both of these senses but also as a textually
constituted, linguistic phenomenon. I argue for this three-sided perspective because it incorporates comprehensions of discourse, text, and communication – all central to this research and the method of critical discourse analysis.

3.6 Summary
Theories and concepts on discourse, text, representation, celebrity advocacy, spectatorship of suffering, and othering frame this research. The presented theoretical framework is of contextual character because the method of critical discourse analysis draws from the environment of the studied phenomenon.

Fairclough’s understanding of discourse aids the theoretical framework of this analysis as it presents itself compatible with the study of social media. This allows to conduct the analysis by his considerations. Establishing an understanding of text specific to the practice of social media and this study further motivates the choice of method and introduces the discussion of representations. Theory of representation is necessary because it provides me with a critical perspective to Rowling’s texts on Twitter and highlights motives of tweeting that I want to identify.

The concepts of celebrity advocacy and spectatorship of suffering meet the theoretical framework at the intersection of the user’s two roles as text producer and text consumer. Besides offering indicators for sociocultural structures and ideologies, the theories can be used to position Rowling as a social media user: While Rowling is positioned in more of a consumer role regarding spectatorship of suffering (that does imply passivity), she is an active producer of representations regarding celebrity advocacy. Framing my research, this means that combining the two concepts acknowledges the duality of discursive practice on Twitter. The extraction of indicators from both concepts provides tools for me to analyse the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets.

Finally, the theoretical framework of this thesis includes a discussion of othering because it ties together the conceptual understandings of discourse and text, the practical aspects of communication, and the ideological implications of representation, celebrity advocacy, and spectatorship of suffering. The consultation of ideas about othering accumulates a three-sided perspective, accounting for the self in communication, sense
making, and language use on Twitter. The theory of othering will help to interpret notions of it in Rowling’s tweets and ascribe them probable causalities. The theoretical frame will allow drawing conclusions for all three senses of othering in the analysis.

4. Literature Review

This chapter serves to present previous research on the essential objects of this study. Here, I relate relevant literature and studies to the research problem and locate this thesis in the research field. I choose an interdisciplinary approach to gather relevant literature and previous research of several scholarly perspectives because there is only little concrete research to be found regarding celebrities on Twitter and none regarding J. K. Rowling’s Twitter engagement. Therefore, this literature review ties together discussions about Rowling’s authorship, Twitter in the situational context of crisis and related politics, and celebrity Twitter users. It aims to motivate my research interest, funnel a thematic overview, and sketch out the research gap calling for this study.

4.1 The author, British identity, and the other

Rowling and her authorship have been studied within the academic fields of Literature, Cultural Studies, and Education. Three of these studies examine notions and structures within Rowling’s fantasy novels regarding issues of identity and power.

Two studies by McGreevy (2004) and Rana (2011) are unified in their hypotheses that Rowling’s Harry Potter fantasy texts play, explicitly as well as hidden, with British matters and British identity. McGreevy (2004) points out the importance of Rowling’s British nationality for her authorship and the author’s own emphasis of it. She finds evidence that Rowling’s novels portray and communicate her ideologies and are means of self-identification. Rana (2011) finds narrative strategies of Rowling that function in a similar way: “Through the depiction and, in fact, creation of otherness in the Harry Potter novels, different types of selves are created and reinforced” (ibid., p. 55). She argues that Rowling utilizes different characteristics prominent within distinctive European cultures to depict several groups of ‘others’ in opposition and clear contrast to the British-ness of the main characters.
In the same way, both scholars make connections between Rowling’s political and humanitarian engagement and her authorship. McGreevy connects storylines of the Harry Potter novels to Rowling’s political stance: “Rowling has made the UK’s education system a target of satire in her latest book” (ibid., p. 39). McGreevy interprets the problematization of curricular changes within the school of wizardry in the storyline of Rowling’s novels as a hidden critique of missing creative spaces and activities at British and American schools. Rana recap Rowling’s reputation as a humanitarian activist and explains that, at first sight and fundamental levels, “the Harry Potter novels do indeed strike a light for multiculturalism, racial harmony and emancipation” (ibid., p. 46). However, the scholar observes imperialism and notions of British superiority in Rowling’s storylines. She argues that within the deeper structures of the stories, prejudiced othering can be found. Complementing Rana’s observations, another study accounts for the linguistic representations in Rowling’s stories and characterises these as means of othering (Solodova, 2015).

McGreevy, Rana, and Solodova’s hypotheses offer perspectives for the research on Rowling’s authorship. Still, their conclusions might not necessarily be valid for texts outside her novels. In this thesis, a different genre of Rowling’s texts is looked at, which means that the transfer might require caution and contextual justification. Still, like her novels, Rowling’s tweets undergo her authorship and are being published to the platform with unrestricted, global access. Therefore, the scholars’ observations inspire this study and promote a critical approach to Rowling’s tweets.

4.2 Twitter, crisis, and politics

Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting are located within the situational context of the event. Specifically, her tweets situate the Shooting as a social and political crisis debated and spectated upon on Twitter. Within the field of media and communication studies, research has touched upon Twitter practices in times of crisis and following tragedy: In their anthology “Twitter and Society” Weller et al. (2013) account for the role of Twitter following natural disasters like hurricane Sandy or tragedies like the Sandy Hook School Shooting in Connecticut. A paper by Bruns and Burgess (2013) presents their study on Twitter as a communicative tool during the Queensland Floods and Christchurch Earthquakes in 2011. In a similar way, Eriksson
(2016) conducts a study on “the role of Twitter after the 2011 Norway attacks” (ibid., p. 365). Maireder and Ausserhofer (2013) conduct case studies on three different political and social conflicts in Austria.

The introduced previous research departs from different comprehensions of Twitter’s role in society and its relation to traditional media. Weller et al. (2013) identify Twitter as a fundamental media element within today’s society. The authors characterise the platform as “a source of real-time information and a place for debate in news, politics, business, and entertainment” (ibid., p. xxx). Like Weller et al., Bruns and Burgess attribute Twitter to have gained “legitimation and official adoption” (2013, p. 373) as an element of the media landscape. In contrast to Weller et al. and Bruns and Burgess, Eriksson (2016) locates Twitter aside the media landscape “as a backchannel and alternative medium” (ibid., p. 368), observing separate discussions between traditional media outlets and the platform. Similar to Eriksson, Maireder and Aussenhofer’s research (2013) carries the notion of Twitter as an alternative medium, compared to traditional media. The researchers find that Twitter serves as a source of information and forum for discussion outside the interpretations of traditional media outlets.

The scholars consider Twitter to have different levels of significance and to play different roles in the examined discursive communication. As a result, the presented studies offer a variety of characterisations of Twitter during and following the respective events. Bruns and Burgess’ research ascribes Twitter “a significant mediating and coordinating function” (2013, p. 374) during crisis. They identify user profiles with the biggest audience and most interaction during the crisis: local authorities, national news stations, and celebrities (ibid.). Maireder and Ausserhofer (2013) describe that the Twitter environment typically transforms from a news broadcast to a political forum after negative incidents. The scholars execute a study examining Twitter conversations and activities following “three outstanding political events in Austria” (ibid., p. 307). They note that “users participating in the discourses find themselves within a public social negotiation of the meaning of political events - for themselves, for their social network, for the actors of the political arena, and thus, for society in general” (ibid., p. 316) and therefore identify Twitter as a reorganisation of societal political conversation. Matching the idea of a symptomatic progression of discussed topics following and regarding an event, Eriksson finds that there is a symptomatic progression of different themes
within the Twitter communication about the attack in Norway (2016). She argues that the thematic progression advanced from predominance of initial reaction and information about the attack to explanation of the attack. Furthermore, Eriksson argues the final stage of Twitter communication, as way of coping with the tragedy, was the discussion of gun laws and demand for political action in order to prevent future attacks. She concludes that in a general sense, Twitter was mainly used as the means for sense making of the event.

4.3 Celebrities on Twitter

Although their Twitter practice is not a new occurrence, celebrities like Rowling receive only limited scholarly attention. Between the science of psychology and celebrity studies research, discussions evolve around celebrities’ use of the platform for communication with fans (e.g. Stever and Lawson, 2013), the manifestation of fan and star identities through the platform (e.g. Giles, 2017), and how celebrity Twitter practice projects social presence (e.g. Kim and Song, 2016). The foci of these studies lie on followers as audiences on Twitter because the scholars examine their interactions with and perceptions of the celebrities.

Looking for research that focuses on the celebrity Twitter user as a producer of media texts, I found that celebrity Twitter practice is rarely a subject of research. Scholars mostly brush celebrities as user groups without in-depth research, aiming for unrelated findings. Nevertheless, this type of research illustrates structures and power relations on the platform. Additionally, it presents characterisations of celebrity Twitter practice.

For example, Wu et al. (2011) study Twitter communication in terms of content shared and user groups. They establish four types of user groups whose communicative network and practices they examine: “Celebrities”, “Media”, “Organizations”, “Blogs” (ibid., p. 708). The researchers relate Twitter activities within these groups and to each other, finding that the groups are mostly engaging amongst their members. Looking at the group of celebrity users they identify that nearly 40 percent of all content posted by this group are ‘retweets’ (re-posts of the original tweet with a reference of the authors profile) of other celebrity users (ibid.). Wu et al. stress their finding that “less than 0.05% of the user population attract almost 50% of all attention within Twitter” (ibid., p. 709) which includes the celebrity users. Hereby, they essentially remark the institu-
tionalization of media production by user elites on the platform. While this study ascribes celebrities certain power as Twitter users, the research lacks proper investigation of their practices. Marwick and boyd (2011) respond to the lack of qualitative, in-depth research of celebrity Twitter practice and execute a study on celebrity Twitter users Mariah Carey, Miley Cyrus, and Perez Hilton (ibid., pp. 150-155). Like Wu et al., Marwick and boyd observe that typically, the celebrities will communicate publicly amongst each other. Marwick and boyd argue that this serves two purposes. One being that the celebrity users aim to showcase their private selves and as a result satisfy their fans with personal insights. The other being that the celebrity users thereby gain control over the attention of their audiences. Marwick and boyd observe that the nature of Twitter corresponds well with the aims of celebrities as public figures longing for and living of attention. Additionally, drawing from Goffman’s theory on self-presentation, Marwick and boyd acknowledge a notion of performativity in celebrity Twitter practice.

4.4 Summary

The literature review has gathered impressions of previous research around the author, British identity, and the other; Twitter, crisis, and politics; and celebrities on Twitter as the periphery of my topic within fields of literature and cultural studies, celebrity and media and communication studies. Besides exhibiting previous research, the reviewed literature provides interesting hypotheses and reveals several points of entry for my analysis.

The previous research on Rowling’s narratives promotes to take critical perspectives of her authorship because these emphasize the functionality of her narratives. This connects to the theoretical framework and the method of this study because it suggests examining her texts for ideological structures, and notions of power and identity. Moreover, the previous studies of Rowling’s narratives regarding her personal engagement and biography have expressed curiosity in the relation between these aspects and emphasized the fruitful perspective of a contextual approach to her texts. The review of media and communication studies and celebrity studies literature has revealed celebrity Twitter practice as an important but neglected object of investigation. This supports the approach to join the scholarly discussions and examine Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting as a study of celebrity Twitter practice after
tragedy. The variety of previous Twitter research in situational contexts of crisis and tragedy reflects the scholarly interest in the phenomena and motivates this study as part of media and communication research.

Looking at the different understandings of Twitter’s role in society and its relation to traditional media, I adapt a blend of the proposed notions to base my study on. While Twitter certainly is more incorporated than off-site, the platform is kept from the centre of traditional media production and consumption because it fuses the two factors. Twitter (like other social media) is the place within the media landscape today, where there is no institutionalised distinction between the content producers and the audience. Still, it is crucial to acknowledge and problematize the ratios of producers and consumers highlighted by Wu et al. (2011). In terms of importance for society, I would argue that the participatory nature of Twitter plays a role for discursive communication due to its easy accessibility and real-time character.

Corresponding with the previously established understanding of discourse, this study is located at the intersection of media and communication studies key themes media production and media consumption on the Twitter platform. Like the literature review, the research fuses disciplinary approaches and interests. Until now, studies of Rowling’s writing appear exclusive to literature and cultural studies. As a result, no research exists on her persona in/and the media. However, the public’s interest, resonating in 14 million Twitter users following Rowling’s profile, and news media naming her “a Twitter guru” (McCluskey, 2017) and one of “the 30 most influential people on the internet” (Ross, 2016), should call for the interest of media and communication scholars.

Relating the disciplinary interests, it can be found that all attentions focus on communicative structures, social relations, and representations. The mutuality validates this study and motivates the theoretical framework. Reviewing the interdisciplinary literature, I realize the lack of qualitative research. Scholars mostly conduct their case studies in quantitative manner aiming to make general conclusions to understand the complex matter. I argue that the complexity actually promotes a qualitative approach for the thematic and motivates the choice to look at a specific persona and a specific event.
5. Research Methodology
This chapter serves to explain how this study was conducted. First, I discuss the data collection, present the sample, and introduce the method of analysis as I adapted the method to the nature of my sample. Following the adaption and conduct, I reflect upon the method by explaining validity, limitations and benefits. The discussion of ethical issues about my study concludes this chapter.

5.1 Data Collection and Sample
I collected my data from J. K. Rowling’s Twitter profile within six weeks from the Parkland School Shooting (14th February – 31st March 2018). For a holistic approach, the sample includes all of Rowling’s tweets (this includes re-tweets) regarding the Shooting within the timeframe indicated above. I selected the tweets from Rowling’s Twitter profile by identifying related keywords and hashtags in Rowling’s and/or the retweeted texts:

- Parkland
- Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School
- School Shooting
- #MarchForOurLives
- #Douglasstrong

As a result, the sample consists of six tweets of Rowling dated 15th (two posts), 16th, 21nd, 23rd of February 2018, and 25th of March.
Fig. 1 Sample: Screenshots of Rowling’s tweets
5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

My study is inspired by the methodology of critical discourse analysis (mainly by Fairclough’s model, Fig. 2) because the aim is to investigate the essential aspect of communication on Twitter: text. “Texts are social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 6). Fairclough’s understanding of text from more than twenty years ago carries the notions of space, representation, and interaction I consider to be the essence of Twitter today. Furthermore, I chose to consult Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis because he emphasizes production and consumption of texts, as well as representation of discourse within media (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b). These two aspects are considered to be essential in social media and as a result the method compatible with the study of these platforms (Unger et al., 2016). Taking into account that “Language use – in any text – is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 55), a study by the model of critical analysis of social media texts presents great opportunity to examine the entirety of social practices within Twitter in form of this study.

![Fig. 2 Fairclough’s framework for critical discourse analysis (1995b, p. 59)]
My critical discourse analysis of texts relates to the post-structuralism strand of critical theory paradigms because the essential assumptions of critical discourse analysis and post-structuralism are very compatible: Post-structuralism accounts for the cultural differences of sense-making (McKee, 2003), and critical discourse analysts account for the cultural bias within text production and consumption (Fairclough, 1995a). As critical discourse analysis emphasizes on the ways language is used (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b), the post-structuralist view mainly highlights the ways knowledge is generated (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Both perspectives are unified in their contextualizing character, aiming to decode and trace instead of judging practices and phenomena.

5.3 Adaption of the Analytical Model and Conduct

Carrying out the study, I used Fairclough’s model (see Fig. 2) as a guideline, considering perspectives of a broad “multi-modal discourse analysis” (Page et al., 2014, p. 96) approach. This means that incorporated formats like pictures and videos are being acknowledged and considered in the research (ibid.). Thus, the multi-modal approach offers ideas for aspects of Twitter practice that escape the purely linguistic analysis (Jewitt, 2014; Norris and Maier, 2014). This approach also corresponds with and answers to Chouliaraki’s call for the analytics of mediation understood as multi-layered constructions and interpretations of meaning (2006b). I adapt the method to serve the multi-modal character of tweets by changing the research object of the first analytical step from text to tweet (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). As a result, the analysis embraces the texts and all visual media of Rowling’s tweets.

Providing the means to uncover “connections between the use of language and the exercise of power” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 54), the method enabled me to undertake a holistic analysis of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting. I also consulted several media scholars’ work on discourse (analysis) in social media (Bouvier, 2015; Page et al., 2014; Unger et al., 2016) and adapted Fairclough’s framework to my specific case (see Fig. 3).

As presented in the introduction of this thesis, I formulated three research questions for my study. The research questions correlate with my adaption of the critical discourse
analysis model as each question embraces one layer of the analytical model. Subsequently, the three questions guide the conduct of the analysis.

Fairclough suggests a model of critical discourse analysis, progressing from linguistic to increasingly contextual aspects of text. Starting the analysis, this means that the first step is conducted in descriptive manner, looking at language use. Here, the different types of tweets in the sample require two approaches. The original tweet and comments on the re-tweets are subject to a linguistic analysis. All re-tweeted texts are subject to contextualization because their texts do not originate from Rowling’s authorship, meaning that a linguistic analysis in relation to Rowling’s writing would not be valid.

Fairclough’s model suggests conducting contextualization later in the process of critical discourse analysis. However, I felt the need to introduce and contextualize the re-tweets first because they are such an essential visual and practical aspect of the tweets. Therefore, I incorporated their description (and partly their analysis) in the first layer of my model (see Fig. 3).

As proposed by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) I drew explanations and interpretations from Halliday’s linguistic approach (Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) to analyse the original tweet and comments on a textual level. Furthermore, I consulted the previously established theoretical framework for aspects of representation and othering as linguistic symptoms. This layer of analysis was guided by RQ1: What characterizes the tweets of J. K. Rowling following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting in Florida? Here, I tried to read with and against the texts, as this can serve as a tactical approach of this step in critical discourse analysis (Janks, 1997). For this step, I gathered key aspects that my descriptive, linguistic analysis focuses on. As suggested by Fairclough (1995a), I examined presences and absences within the texts. I also examined Rowling’s word choice and phrasing in order to uncover notions of power and representation. Additionally, Halliday’s approach offers hypotheses for Rowling’s punctuation and voice/speech indications. The aim of this step was to critically describe and analyse Rowling’s tweet on a textual level in order to make ideological and power related observations that I could relate and interpret in the following steps of analysis.
Fairclough’s model suggests analysing the “discursive practice of a communicative event” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 57) next. Having found the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets, for my study this means taking a look at the practices and structures within communication on Twitter. Conveniently matching Fairclough’s layout, Twitter practice essentially consists of the writing of tweets (→ text production) and the reading and reacting to tweets (→ text consumption). This analytical layer provided an arena for me to connect findings of the previous layer to the general aspects and circumstances of Twitter practice. As a result, the respective chapter gives practical explanations for the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets, putting my observations into perspective. Besides this, the aim of this analytical layer is to relate Rowling’s tweets to previously studied Twitter practice in times of crisis. The theoretical stances of spectatorship of suffering aid this relation. Here, my analysis follows **RQ2: How do the characteristics of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting relate to the discursive practice of Twitter?**

For the final step of analysis, Fairclough calls to contextualize and attempt to explain the phenomenon of research. He notes that this part should look at economic, political, and cultural issues (ibid., p. 62) of the sociocultural practice. For my study this contextualization deals with humanitarian and political engagement of celebrities and answers to **RQ3: How do the characteristics of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting correspond with the sociocultural practice of celebrity advocacy?** At this point, the previous layers of analysis conclude a critical discussion of the findings. Having identified linguistic characteristics, contextual notions, and practical symptoms, my study of Rowling’s tweets feeds of the discussions about celebrity advocacy.

The following figure visualizes my methodological approach to this research. The dashed boarders signify that the discussion cannot be sectioned entirely. At several points of the analysis, I touch upon related aspects of other layers of the analysis.
Working with several small tweets from one user, I debated whether to consider the texts as one narrative, or each tweet as an individual, alone standing piece. The (visual and practical) characteristics of Twitter promote the latter option. However, new tweets are posted on top of the profile page of the Twitter user, pushing older tweets down. Therefore, the reading experience of the posts as a narrative can be confusing opposed to a traditional, chronological narrative. Additionally, other tweets that do not regard the Shooting mix in the feed. Still, the dominance of a tied together character and flow/sequence of tweets in my opinion discourages isolated, individual analyses. Consulting literature on discourse analysis, I found this idea of a construction of pieces in Bainbridge’s take on the analysis: “Discourse analysis therefore focuses on the way texts work together to provide certain ways of representing the world” (2008, p. 236). Conveniently, the model of critical discourse analysis by Fairclough (1995a, 1995b) provided a way for me to progress from an individual, linguistic analysis to a collective contextual and discursive analysis, piecing the analyses of the tweets together.
5.4 Methodological Reflections
Reflecting upon the methodological approaches of this study, it is crucial to critically assess the validity of my endeavours. Additionally, the methodological reflections weigh the limitations and the benefits of the method in the study.

5.4.1 Authenticity, Credibility, and Transferability
The study demonstrates validity through the authenticity and duality of the collected data as the phenomenon and its representation. Guba and Lincoln (1982) theorise that credibility of research is ensured through the accuracy of the research material and its respective depiction. Hence, it is a great advantage for the findings of my research that the sample essentially represents the entirety of the phenomenon. In other words, the material used to study the phenomenon is not only a transcription fabricated by me as a researcher, but the tweets are the phenomenon under investigation.

With the sample including all related tweets and the research questions guiding a rich, contextual description of the phenomenon, my study also serves Guba and Lincoln’s (1982) criteria for transferability to a great amount. I am confident that the arguments of my study provide hypotheses that can be applied to similar phenomena.

5.4.2 Limitations and Benefits
A limitation of the method is the interdependence of the analysis of text and authorship. Research on the first layer of Fairclough’s model is closely bound to the authorship of Rowling. Yet, some of the tweets do not have text authored by her. Therefore, they cannot be examined with the same linguistic tools. However, my adaption of Fairclough’s model proposes a possible solution for this dilemma. I believe that the missing textual authorship should not exclude the tweets from the analysis but rather challenge a new perspective that calls for early contextualization in the process of analysis and highlights the practical authorship of re-tweets. Hence, Rowling might not be the author of the tweet she posts by re-tweeting but she certainly and very importantly is the author of the action of re-tweeting and the choice of original tweet to re-tweet. This different type of authorship needs to be recognized and I feel confident that my adaption of Fairclough’s model answers to the method’s limitation.
Sketching out the limits of this analysis and reflecting on the relatively small size and the nature of the presented sample, I realize that my study does not allow making any general conclusions. However, it is important to note that the aim of this study as qualitative research is to observe and investigate very concrete phenomena (Layder, 2013). Critical discourse as well as media and communication scholars highlight the orientation of the method towards specific problems, too (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Unger et al., 2016). This means that although the analysis of Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting is not representative, it is relevant to the method and highlights the prospects of a critical discourse analysis on this matter. The method of “problem-driven” (Layder, 2013, p. 70) sampling as prior step to the analysis (see chapter 5.1 Data Collection and Sample) can be considered the fundamental supporting factor of this emphasis. Subsequently, the study actually benefits from the in-depth approach to very concrete phenomena enabled by the method.

This research also benefits from the match of the method, its conceptual and theoretical implications, and the nature of the studied phenomenon. Despite Fairclough’s considerations being nearly twenty-five years old, the emphasis on text production and text consumption practices presented itself very compatible with the practice of Twitter. Anticipating that I would come across some challenges applying a rather traditional research method on a contemporary phenomenon/problem, I found that the means of Fairclough’s model are actually very relevant to social media. His differentiation of representations of discourse in new media as “Direct Discourse (DD) and Indirect Discourse (ID)” (1995a, p. 55) responds well to the voice characteristics I detected in Rowling’s tweets and her re-tweeting practice. This, again, promotes the strengths of critical discourse analysis in the context of social media research.

5.5 Ethical Considerations
Discourse analysis “requires a sample” and “it is also subject to the same accusations as content analysis; that is, it can be used in a subjective way” (Bainbridge et al., 2008, p. 236). Sampling for critical discourse analysis, especially in this sensible context could be used in a persuasive manner to imply some sort of (im)morality. Due to this ethical consideration, my study includes all of Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the
Shooting. This ensures a holistic approach and frees sampling from its risk of manipulation.

Like with all qualitative research, the ethical concern of subjectivity is raised because this study originates from my own perception. Chouliaraki and Fairclough challenge this concern, noting that in regards to the method of critical discourse analysis the underlying problem of research characteristically is of perceptive nature (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). The ethical concern and the scholars’ argumentation highlight the value of theoretical input because it validates the findings outside of perceptive and subjective issues.

Furthermore, the interdependence of the analysis of text and authorship on Twitter, as discussed in the previous chapter, raises ethical issues. On the one hand, the primary focus of my critical discourse analysis lies on the linguistic analysis of “text (as a de-contextualized object)” (Page et al., 2014, p. 60). On the other hand, the format of social media text from Twitter and the emphasis on contextualization of the method inevitably name the author a research subject, too. This means that the examination of (anonymous) texts in critical discourse analysis unavoidably becomes an analysis of “people (their identities, behaviour and interactions)” (ibid.). The Association of Internet Research Ethics Committee recommends that therefore it is crucial to constantly reflect upon the vulnerability of the latter and to differentiate between the analysis of research objects versus research subjects (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). Considering this vulnerability and additional ethical aspects like privacy, this research is not of unbearable risk. J. K. Rowling is a public figure/celebrity and her tweets are under no restricted visibility or any privacy protecting precautions, a setting she is able to make herself. Most likely, she is aware of the dimension of her audience on Twitter as the platform quantifies and displays the reach of and the responding actions to published tweets. Moreover, she engages in popular discussions and responds to popular content (e.g. commenting and re-tweeting), positioning herself publicly. As a result, Rowling does not appear particularly vulnerable to concerns of privacy. To a certain extend the same considerations need to be made for the authors and publishers of the original tweets Rowling re-tweets, too. However, they only play a secondary role as references rather than research subjects in the analysis. Still, I feel the need to mention this concern. I am confident that my research is not harming the Twitter users in any way. Additionally, I
checked all the re-tweeted users and profiles for their organic reach and privacy settings to make sure that these factors do not indicate concerns from their sides. All re-tweeted profiles (@jaredbkeller, @SzZeif, @ConservativeTht, @nowthisnews, @cnnbrk, @THR) have not set up any privacy restrictions and have an organic reach of at least 21 thousand followers. As a result, the re-tweeted users as references for contextualization do not appear particularly vulnerable to concerns of privacy either.

6. Presentation and Analysis of Findings

This chapter serves to present and discuss my findings. As elaborated in the previous chapter, the analysis progresses from a rather individual, linguistic discussion to an increasingly collective debate of the tweets. As a result, the first chapter of this part serves as a tweet-by-tweet examination of factors like word choice, presences and absences, voicing, and (for the re-tweets) addresses the textual context. The analysis of these aspects follows Fairclough’s theory of discourse and Halliday’s theory about language use, ultimately connecting the findings to considerations about representation, othering, and power relations. The second chapter of this part attends to the discursive Twitter practice following tragedy and discusses the findings in relation to text production and text consumption on the platform. Finally, the tweets are analysed from the perspectives of celebrity advocacy in the third chapter of this part, drawing from the findings of the previous chapters.

6.1 The Characteristics of Rowling’s Tweets

As previously presented (in 5.1 Data Collection and Sample), I numbered Rowling’s tweets in chronological order (A= first tweet, F= latest tweet). However, I want to emphasize Rowling’s authorship in this section and therefore conduct the analysis in a different order. Here, the tweets are discussed by ranking them from a very high degree of authorship to decreasing linguistic input of Rowling. This results in the following sequence:

- Tweet C (original tweet)
- Tweets E, F (commented re-tweets)
- Tweets A, B, D (re-tweets)
**Tweet C** is an original tweet of Rowling. It consists of a text with a photo underneath. The photo is a screenshot of a tweet published by a Twitter user called ‘David Burke’ (@ConservativeTht). The user’s tweet tells a conversation between the user and ‘A European friend’ about the circumstances of the Parkland School Shooting.

Rowling’s text, visually and contextually referencing the user’s tweet, is characterised by an intricate play of voices and a resulting dialogic character. By addressing the user with “Hi David!” Rowling ensures the contextual reference. Rowling’s text then follows the purpose of rectifying the user’s account of his friend’s opinion.

Rowling’s word choice gives first clues about the spirit/mood of her text. She uses “fictional” and “authentic” in the same sentence, referring to the same subject. This supports a confrontational character of her tweet.

Rowling creates the voicing in her text by authoring sentences she assigns to a figure she calls the “*real* European” (whose statements are grammatically indicated by single quotation marks). Halliday and Matthiessen name this way of using voice characters the “idea ‘mental projecting process” (2004, p. 445). They note that this projection embodies a motive of representation in order to reason a statement (ibid., p. 449). This idea can be applied to Rowling’s text, finding the explanation that she projects her ideas on characters in order to suggest (“might say”) a certain representation. This idea can also be applied to Rowling’s phrasing “You seem to be struggling to make” as an assumption and projection of weakness. Adding to this notion of projection is the absence of first person pronouns and Rowling’s play with proportions using “you” versus “we”. Here, Halliday and Matthiessen suggest a classification of “speech roles”, denominating the second person pronoun the “listener” (ibid., p. 325). Drawing from Halliday and
Matthiessen, this underlines Rowling’s addressing of the user David Burke, establishing herself as the speaker through the character.

Looking at the allocation of roles, it appears particularly interesting that Rowling does not use the first person singular but the plural pronoun. The absence of “I” and the dominant presence of “we” have a representative character to it. In Rowling’s phrasing the pronoun appears as a projection of meaning on a fictional figure the author creates in the text. Without any “I”, the text stands like a quote without a source because Rowling does not declare wherefrom she draws the sentences and attitude or that she is of the opinion that this is what a European would argue. Additionally, this voicing makes herself as the author disappear completely from the text.

Furthermore, the confrontation of a singular “you” versus “we” can be observed as an extensive form of othering. Compared to the common symptomatic representation of othering by differentiating “us and them” (Rana, 2011, p. 46), Rowling’s othering is characterized by a play with proportions. While “us and them” (ibid.) are collective pronouns and suggest a group versus group scenario, Rowling’s singular “you” and “we” suggests a one versus many proportion. This serves persuasive, missionary notions of the text.

Besides othering “you” versus “we” throughout her text, the one time use of first person perspective concludes her confrontational text with an emotional notion. The phrase “don’t use me to argue for more guns” projects a sense of helplessness because the pronoun “me” stands weakly against the “we” and therefore appears very small and personal. Here, the first person is an object to the action, characterising it as passive. At the same time, Rowling’s projection carries a notion of courage because she depicts the fictional person to stand up against the user’s exploitation. The notion of courage can be underlined with the emphasis that negative imperatives like “don’t” are commands that project power onto their caller (Halliday, 1994).

Overall, the observed and examined characteristics of the tweet distribute power between three entities: the author of the original tweet, the Twitter user David Burke; the subject of the text, the European figure; and Rowling, as the author of the tweet under observation. At first sight, the European figure receives the greatest amount of power in
this constellation and the author of the referred tweet the least amount. Looking at Rowling’s position however, it becomes clear that the constellation actually serves her superiority because, instead of arguing as herself, she lectures through a figure. At the same time, the absence of “I” hides her authorship and contributes to a notion of universality of her arguments.

Additionally, a hint of superiority is introduced by the fact that instead of re-tweeting the Twitter user, Rowling shares a screenshot of his tweet. This observation is attended to in the next chapter of the analysis.

**Tweet E** is a commented re-tweet. This means that Rowling re-posted another user’s content and added her own text above it. The tweet Rowling reposted is an article of CNN Breaking News (@cnnbrk). The article has a picture to it, which shows a big crowd of people on a grass field. The text of the article explains that the picture shows American students on a walk-out following the Parkland School Shooting.

![Fig. 5 Tweet E](image)

Rowling’s text as a comment above CNN’s tweet is a quote. This is indicated by single quotation marks and a reference to the source “Aeschylus, The Libation Bearers”. The quote cannot be examined in the same manner as texts that stem from Rowling’s authorship. However, investigating Rowling’s choice of the quote as an indirect word choice is an interesting perspective to take on.

Contextually, this tweet is more complex because for the consumer of the text it requires knowledge about an unrelated topic, the quote. As a result, there are two ways of approaching this tweet: an uninformed and an informed analysis. The uninformed analysis represents the reader who only has the knowledge the tweet provides in order to
grasp its meaning. While this analysis lacks contextualization of the quote, it is not at all irrelevant because not every Twitter user that encounters this tweet will have the required knowledge. Still, Rowling’s indirect word choice (as in choosing a certain quote) relates to the original tweet and shows initial notions and possible motives of her post. Therefore, the quote can be related to the CNN article and the thematic of the Parkland School Shooting. Possible interpretations of the sentence “the answer is in the house” could include that the solution to the suffering (school shootings), the answer, needs to be issued by the government, the (white) house.

The informed analysis represents the reader who has previously acquired knowledge or chooses to simultaneously research and learn about the quote. This reader will know that the text stems from a Greek drama about justice and moral responsibility (Mastin, 2009). Besides the possible interpretation discussed above, this reader will confirm the notions that the wording of the quote carries with the contextual information. There are two likely reactions of this reader. On the one hand, the informed reader could strongly connect Rowling’s choice of reference with a possible intention of her to compare and encourage the student’s walk-out with the battle for justice in The Libation Bearers by Aeschylus. On the other hand, the informed reader could resist Rowling’s choice of reference because of her elitist use of Greek tragedy.

In linguistic analysis, Halliday and Matthiessen attribute quote and reference a “‘tactic’ relationship” with “equal status” (2004, p. 446). For Rowling’s tweet this means that the author essentially gives two clues for the perception of her comment. First, the actual words and phrasings of the quote enable sense making as an application to the original tweet and the situational context. Second, the reference enables possible sense making of the quote with the information about author and title/source.

For a critical approach of the tweet, I want to take two perspectives. Reading for the tweet, Rowling’s choice for the quote promotes supportive, activist characteristics. With the words of the quote, Rowling literally blesses the event and actions, which the article reports (“Bless the children, send them triumph”). Reading against the tweet, Rowling’s choice of the quote appears to be serving a showcase of intellect and cultivation. In a sense, this showcase could be read as intellectual superiority of Rowling over the issues in the United States of America, because it also suggests ways for “an answer”. 
Overall, tweet E carries notions of intellectual superiority. Similarly to the previously examined tweet C, it has a lecturing, missionary character. Even more than tweet C, tweet E is characterised by the absence of directly expressed opinion, which combined with the quote caters to a heavy and meaningful character requiring immediate interpretation.

The tweet is also characterized by a variety of voices. It incorporates three speakers: Rowling, the Twitter user publishing the tweet; Aeschylus, the author of the quote; and CNN as the reporter and broadcaster of the referenced event. This is partly a result of the practical circumstances of Twitter. I attend to this discussion in the following chapter.

Tweet F is a commented retweet, too. The original tweet is of the Twitter user Hollywood Reporter (@THR) and contains a video. The video is linked under a text that reports the speech of a student activist at gun control protests following the Parkland School Shooting.

Rowling’s text is a comment above the video that lists the incidents of the clip. This tweet is very contextual because until the last line of her text, Rowling does not name the subject of her sentences. Instead the author uses “she”. Still, because the thumbnail and the auto-play scenes of the video show the young woman standing in front of a big crowd, the identification is simple to make.
In contrast to tweet C and tweet E, this tweet does not have particular voices formatted as quotes or speech. Here, Rowling simply accumulates observations in one sentence. Her second sentence addresses the activist through a hashtag with her name: “#Sam-Fuentes”. She ends her text with a red heart symbol (emoji). Rowling’s text of this tweet is of progressive character, drawing an arc of suspense. She accounts for the activist’s journey from the Shooting to the video.

Again, Rowling does not use first person perspective but rather attempts an “omniscient narrator” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, p. 462) position. In the first sentence of the tweet this position is very apparent because she uses simple syntax subject-predicate or subject-predicate-object to report occurrences and lists them with commas. In Halliday’s approach I find a compatible “metafunction” (ibid., p. 61) of the syntax that explains this construct as “experiential meaning” (ibid.) aiming for the representation of actor and action. Furthermore, Halliday’s approach reflects and explains Rowling’s text as he argues that this type of sentence “is the natural one to take as prototypical” (ibid.).

In the second sentence the omniscient narrator position additionally carries a notion of universality because it claims a definite judgement. At first sight the phrasing “there are no words” might seem like a personal statement but at a closer look, the absence of first person indicators reveals that Rowling aims to represent more than just her reaction. For Rowling, tweet F functions to pay her respect to the student activist in the video. The praise suggests ideological notions of Rowling because it is accompanied by the account of events and designed with an arc of suspense. From this tweet I can draw that Rowling values bravery and a fighting spirit within public political discourse. The praise also resonates with the stories and characters of her novels, where brave young wizards fight dark creatures and evil power. In this light, the correlation accentuates how Rowling illustrates opposition between student activists and gun supporters, implying a threat of the latter.

The remaining three tweets of the sample are re-tweets without any comment of Rowling. A linguistic analysis of the following three tweets would be invalid regarding my discussion because they are re-tweets without commentary from Rowling. Therefore, the re-tweets will simply be introduced and interpreted here, while their analysis will be
picked up in the next two steps because they are relevant to the analysis regarding Twitter practices.

Tweet A is a re-tweet by Rowling of a Twitter user named Jared Keller (@jaredbkeller). His tweet shares a link to a newspaper homepage with a video preview titled “Student reporter interviews classmates hiding from gunman in Florida high school”. The Twitter user reports what the video shows and comments his appreciation for the actions in the video. In his comment he commands for the maker of the video to be given an award for extraordinary journalist work.

Similar to tweet F, this tweet has an ideological, appreciative character to it because showcases political statement and bravery of students struck by the Parkland School Shooting. Similar to Rowling in her original tweet C, the author of this tweet emphasizes aspects by using the asterisk symbol (*). Additionally, the original text misses first person indicators, too, and as a result is characterized by the author as an omniscient narrator rather than a subjective individual.

Tweet B is a re-tweet by Rowling of a Twitter user named Sam Zeif (@SzZeif). In his tweet he accounts his witnessing of the Shooting with two screenshots of a text message conversation between him and his brother during the event. His heartfelt tweet expresses emotions towards his brother and the audience of his tweet when he tells of his fear during the
Shooting and the relief he experienced reuniting with his brother safely.

Tweet B has a very personal, and sensitive character. The screenshots add to this atmosphere, providing insight in a very private, usually inaccessible matter.

**Tweet D** is a re-tweet by Rowling of a Twitter user named NowThis (@nowthisnews). The tweet introduces a school shooting in Scotland, highlighting the positive consequences of a following gun law reform. The tweet has an attached video, which in its preview shows pictures of victims and survivors of the Shooting. Tweet D has an educational character to it because it presents a historical event and political issue. Additionally, the attached video is of documentary style, interviewing witnesses.

![Fig. 9 Tweet D](image)

The characteristics of this Tweet can be related to the missionary character of Tweet C because it showcases the prospect of a possible gun law reform as a positive example or solution to the US American issue from a foreign perspective. This also means that Tweet D plays a role in the contextualization of Rowling’s tweets in the light of colonialism in the third chapter of this analysis.

Overall, the description of the re-tweets made by Rowling, shows that their characteristics match the previous tweets and texts. An additional mutuality is that all of Rowling’s re-tweets originally stem from Twitter users with a big audience (> 21 thousand followers), most of them marked with a verification symbol (blue circle with a white tick). This symbol means that the user “is determined to be an account of public interest” (Twitter Inc., 2018). The mutuality finds an explanation in the next chapter because it is connected to features of Twitter practice.
Concluding the descriptive, linguistic discussion of Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting, a variety of characteristics are collected, that answer RQ1 (What characterizes the tweets of J. K. Rowling following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting in Florida?). Making textual observations, her tweets are characterized by the absence of first person perspectives, promoting notions of universality, and ultimately positioning the author as an omniscient narrator. Moreover, some recurring notions and characters/moods of Rowling’s tweets implied by word choice and attached media can be found: Together with ideological notions of activism and politics comes an educational and lecturing character of her tweets. Together with reports and witnessing come emotional character and a sentimental mood of the tweets. Recalling the context of Rowling’s usual Twitter practice, the lecturing character of her tweets aligns with reoccurring attitudes of her feed, while the emotional character and sentimental mood appear quite unique. Making practical observations, her tweets are characterized by dialogue through quotes, direct and indirect speech, and the voicing of a persona. All tweets incorporate two or more voices articulated through users and implied by practical aspects of Twitter. Reflecting upon Rowling’s usual Twitter practice, the dominant format of re-tweets and resulting voice characteristics following and regarding the Shooting align with her general feed, too. Similar to the majority of Rowling’s usual tweets, the analysed re-tweets make contextual and ideological use of the original content.

6.2 ... and the Discursive Twitter Practice

The practices on Twitter underline the conceptual foundation of this study: Instead of limiting the understanding of authorship to text only, Rowling’s authorship needs to be understood as an authorship of text, discourse, and social interaction. This allows to include the re-tweets in the analysis, while regarding re-tweeting as a practice of discursive authorship. It is important to realize that although the previous analysis guided by RQ1 has shown that Rowling’s authorship is linguistically very hidden because she abstains from first person perspectives, the visual presentation of Twitter reminds of and highlights her authorship because the username and picture is displayed on top of a tweet. The notion of social media like Twitter as platforms for self-presentation (Bouvier, 2015; Deuze, 2015; Hogan, 2010), strengthens this bond between authorship and representation. Meanwhile, visual representation of authorship helps to put the
voice characteristic of Rowling’s tweets into perspective. In combination with the multi-modality of tweets, the representation of authorship constructs voice characteristics as a practical property of Twitter (boyd et al., 2010). Nevertheless, Rowling certainly takes advantage of this property and contributes to the characteristic by adding even more voices to make her point. This is especially noticeable when looking at her commented re-tweets because these feature secondary, visually displayed, author (-ship).

While uncommented re-tweets cannot be examined by the means of textual analysis because their texts do not stem from Rowling, I propose to interpret them in two ways. Firstly, Rowling’s choice to re-tweet a tweet by another user needs to be put into perspective. As previously observed, all re-tweets originally stem from Twitter users with a big following. It is crucial to realize that this factor is most likely due to the functionality of Twitter, algorithmically displaying popular content on top of one’s feed, recommendations, or search. In other words, if a tweet already has a big reach and big amount of reactions in form of likes, comments, and re-tweets it is more likely to be consumed by users. This creates the basis for a possible re-tweet (boyd et al., 2010) and reveals the practical causality of the observation. In the light of this perspective, Rowling’s tweets highlight the reviewed previous research finding an institutionalization of media production by user elites on the platform (Wu et al., 2011).

Secondly, I want to make an attempt to relate the Twitter specific action of re-tweeting to Fairclough’s terms of direct and indirect discourse (Fairclough, 1995a). From this process I anticipate transferable notions of communicative practice to interpret Rowling’s tweets by. While Fairclough suggests direct and indirect discourse as linguistic characteristics of communication, I would like to propose that these terms can be used for the analysis of practical and multi-modal characteristics of Twitter communication. Fairclough differentiates indirect from direct discourse by identifying prepositions and pronoun changes in texts. He argues that through recalling, reporting, and projecting text (in a sense of speech/opinion) it becomes indirect discourse, characterized as representations of voices. Fairclough suggest that the choice for direct discourse is made by an author in order to highlight the original meaning. In other words, by using direct discourse the author prioritises the secondary (recalled, reported, projected) discourse over his or her own text. With this differentiation Fairclough also highlights that indirect discourse reveals the motive of an author to prioritize his or her own text over the origi-
nal meaning (ibid.). Putting this theoretical lens on Rowling’s tweets, a similar differentiation of discourses can be made that generates valuable interpretations. As a result, Rowling’s commented re-tweets correspond to indirect discourse because she recalls, reports, and projects their meaning in the comment. Simultaneously, this indicates that Rowling prioritizes to produce and express her own text and utilizes the original discourse as support. In contrast, sole re-tweets correspond with direct discourse where Rowling prioritizes the original meaning and ideology because she does not author her own text to it. For a comparative interpretation of Rowling’s tweets as re-tweeting practices, this means that her commented re-tweets (tweets E and F) attribute less meaning to the original tweet, while her sole re-tweets (tweets A, B, and D) attribute power, endorsement, and meaning to the respective original tweets and their authors as the producers of discourse. Thus, the previous analyses of tweets E and F match this outcome, highlighting the functionality of the original tweets by CNN Breaking News and The Hollywood Reporter as not much more than contextual references.

Discussing the discursive practice of re-tweeting I feel the need to direct critical attention to tweet C. As presented in the previous chapter the tweet is an original tweet by Rowling with an attached picture. At first sight however, the tweet appears like a re-tweet because the attached picture shows an original tweet by another Twitter user. Seeking practical explanation for this procedure, I searched for the original tweet on the user’s Twitter feed and was unable to find it. While I cannot assure that it was deleted by the time Rowling came across it, this might be the reason for the peculiar format of tweet C. An explanation for the format of this tweet could also be that this way the author of the original tweet is not notified about her post and less likely to notice or argue back at Rowling. Moreover, this tweet is peculiar because Rowling addresses only the user in her text, yet she shares it publicly instead of sending a private message. It almost seems like she is assuming that the user represents a bigger group that needs this rectification. This supports interpretations about the motive of self-presentation because Rowling’s public lecturing of an opponent aids to present herself as an advocate of ideological notions. I will draw from this observation in the next chapter of this part.

Having discussed Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting in relation to Twitter practice focusing on the dominance of re-tweets, in the following section I compare her tweets to the discursive Twitter practice following tragedy
made by previous research. I want to relate her tweets to characteristics of Twitter practice in times of tragedy.

As reviewed, Eriksson (2016) observes a symptomatic progression of Twitter practice from production and consumption of content within news discourses in the immediate days after the tragic event to engagement in political discourses later. In contrast, Rowling’s tweets are of political and ideological character right away. Apart from tweet B, all of her tweets following and regarding the School Shooting circle around gun law debates, the US American gun mentality, and (student) activism. It becomes clear that Rowling utilizes Twitter as platform for political and ideological commentary. In a sense of spectatorship of suffering, this commentary emphasizes the practical feature of self-presentation on Twitter: “the performative aspect of posting comments—they might, more or less consciously, be staged for the views of others” (Mortensen and Trenz, 2016, p. 347). By becoming a spectator who simultaneously is spectated upon, Rowling consciously positions herself in critical oppositions to the discourses of the affected group. Similarly, because she solely engages with content from US American user profiles, her tweets relate to Mortensen and Trenz’s theory, arguing that spectatorship of suffering “constituting publics of shared concerns” (Mortensen and Trenz, 2016, p. 345). In this sense, the discursive Twitter practice enables Rowling to integrate herself into the distant public of US American discourses by spectating upon the realm of the Shooting without following a symptomatic progression. It is also likely that the nature of Rowling’s tweets serves her authenticity because it practically and visually bridges the distance between herself and the event. Within spectatorship on social media, this bridging serves “a more immediate relationship with sufferers” (ibid., p. 346) and as a result assists her discursive proximity to the distant public.

Further drawing from theory about spectatorship of suffering and on social media, my analysis reveals that Rowling as a spectator and being spectated upon, uses Twitter practice to engage within discourses of US American gun debates, politics, and student activism. The characteristics of her tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting relate closely to Mortensen and Trenz’s typology of “The Social Media User as a Critical Observer” (Mortensen and Trenz, 2016, p. 353). The scholars characterise the critical observer in their study of the public in spectatorship of suffering. Enabled by the phenomenon that social media makes the spectator being spectated upon, they argue
that this social media user type’s “engagement in critical and often also political discourse either addresses a collective responsibility in the agency of states and governments, humanitarian organisations and citizens or critical observers assign responsibility/blame on the level of individual actors” (ibid.). I found notions of these appeals in her tweets (e.g. tweet D showcases the success of gun bans and highlights governmental responsibility, tweet F praises the endeavour of student activists.)

Mortensen and Trenz’s typology also enables to connect the linguistic findings concerning othering (tweet C, lecturing an individual user) to the observation of Rowling’s practical bridging of distance: “users emphasising nearness seem to perceive of themselves as part of a collective “we”, while users emphasising distance either construct a collective “you” who should take action or an individual “you” to blame” (ibid., p. 356). This differentiation highlights the selective integration by Rowling. While her practice of re-tweeting discussed above suggest a nearness to the US American discourses, her othering in the light of Mortensen and Trenz’s typology reveals disassociation. This happens because Rowling’s “we” is supposed to represent Europeans, and the “you” is supposed to address an individual US American user. Ultimately, this shows that tweet C, in contrast to the other tweets, implies distance to the US American discourses. While the disassociation assists her authenticity as a European, the integration assists the authenticity within US American discourses. Recalling Hogan’s adaption of Goffman’s theory on self-presentation to social media, the selective, ambivalent integration and disassociation relate to the strategy of “selective details that one presents in order to foster the desired impression” (2010, p. 378).

In conclusion, by answering RQ2 (How do the characteristics of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting relate to the discursive practice of Twitter?), this step of analysis reveals that the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets highly relate to the practical circumstances of the platform. This relation is crucial to make because it explains causalities for the characteristics of her tweets and empowers the critical perspective on the atypical format of tweet C taken above. Fairclough’s considerations about representation of discourse support the linguistic findings. His terms and hypotheses help to find explanations for Rowling’s tweets in relation to the discursive Twitter practice and interpret sole re-tweets as empowering to the original tweet. Furthermore, his perspective helps interpreting Rowling’s commented re-tweets as utili-
tarian. Drawing from Mortensen and Trenz’s typology of spectators, Rowling can be identified as a critical observer regarding the Parkland School Shooting. Finally, the ambivalence of integration and distancing by Rowling can be recognized as a strategy of self-presentation on Twitter.

6.3 ... and Celebrity Advocacy

Having found and linguistically analysed the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets, and then related them to the discursive Twitter practice, I now want to critically inspect them under the lenses of celebrity advocacy as a sociocultural practice. In the theoretical framework I collected the main aspects of celebrity advocacy around its motives and symptoms: self-presentation and performativity, altruism, structures of power and identity, and amplification of cause. In the light of these aspects this chapter discusses the previous findings on Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting.

The theoretical conception of celebrity advocacy problematizes it as “Theatricality of Humanitarianism” (Chouliaraki, 2012) and discusses symptoms of “performative strategies” and “impersonations of altruism” (ibid., p. 4). My linguistic observations and practical findings correspond to these symptoms, emphasizing Rowling’s tweets as means for self-presentation on social media, comprising the ‘offline’ theatricality criticised by Chouliaraki. Rowling’s re-tweeting practice serves as a performative strategy because it showcases her consumption and supports her production of texts on the platform. Furthermore, my analysis reveals the dilemma of apparent altruism on Twitter: While the linguistic findings might support an altruist appearance of Rowling’s tweet because she does not write about herself, the discussion of visual representation of authorship defeats the former characteristic. In other words, while the content of Rowling’s tweets serves an altruist discourse, the foundations of Twitter practice conflict altruist endeavours by primary serving self-presentation. Ultimately, this conflict reveals her tweets as “impersonations of altruism” (ibid., p. 4) instead of selfless propositions. Within the theoretical conception of celebrity advocacy, this revelation feeds of discussing the “production of authenticity” (ibid.). As examined in the previous chapter, Rowling seems to gain authenticity from her tweets by selectively integrating and disassociating herself through different properties.
The analysis of Rowling’s tweets in the light of structures of power and identity requires examining the double positioning of the celebrity to (1.) the subject of solidarity and (2.) their audience. My analysis has already investigated structures of the former and explained power distributions of Rowling’s tweets. Now, I want to assign the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets regarding the latter to Chouliaraki’s typology. Rowling’s tweets do not match Chouliaraki’s study of Hepburn because the scholar finds that the actress’s advocacy relies heavily on first person, anecdotal stories (Chouliaraki, 2012). Similarly, Chouliaraki considers Jolie to construct “testimonies of suffering” (ibid., p. 11) through first person perspectives. While the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets do not correspond with these observations and their respective typologies, an important aspect within Chouliaraki’s discussion is found that does. The scholar identifies “utilitarian altruism” (ibid., p. 11) as a strategy of celebrity advocacy. In the previous chapter Rowling’s re-tweeting practice was disclosed as utilitarian because her tweets harvest from the attached discourses and support her meaning. Chouliaraki draws her conceptualisation from a similar observation, arguing that Jolie’s advocacy is characterised by “the other as a source of knowledge for oneself” (ibid., p. 11).

In her study, Chouliaraki (2012) also finds that Audrey Hepburn and Angelina Jolie practice witnessing as celebrity advocacy. Correspondingly, it can be realized that Rowling’s tweets aim for a similar position because the re-tweeted content mainly is of news and documentary character but ultimately mediates accounts of the tragedy. In contrast, Hepburn and Jolie draw their testimonies from actual encounters with suffering (ibid.). Still, the witness character of her tweets endures the mediation and commentary of Rowling so that I propose to consider them secondary witnessing as celebrity advocacy.

Chouliaraki argues that an essential factor of celebrity advocacy is orchestration of the public figure’s action taking as a role model and spokesperson (2012). While Chouliaraki warns of the “orientalist discourse” (ibid., p. 4) of celebrities’ political and humanitarian activism, Rowling’s tweets show similar symptoms in a colonialist discourse. Similarly, Kapoor criticises “the nationalist/Occidentalist attitude” (2012, p. 26) of celebrity advocacy. Transferring these critical perspectives to the context of colonialism, it goes to show that the missionary, lecturing, and superior character of tweets C,
D, and E correspond to celebrity advocacy, too. This transfer finds three reasons. Firstly, Rowling’s tweet C publicly educates a Twitter user on ideological issues, which relates to colonial interventions of Britain in the United States of America. Secondly, Tweet E corresponds with this aspect of celebrity advocacy and colonialist discourse due to its character of intellectual and cultural superiority. In the light of colonialism as social intervention this highlights that Rowling’s tweets correspond with the conceptualization of celebrity advocacy. Finally, the mediation of voices through re-tweeting and quoting resonates with colonialist discourse like Chouliaraki’s observations of orientalist notions and Kapoor’s identification of nationalist trends. Chouliaraki finds that symptomatically orientalist, celebrity advocacy enhances the dependence of sufferers through representations and missionary endeavours. Transferred to the colonialist discourse, this shows that Rowling’s mediation of voices carries similar threats because it implies that the Twitter users cannot speak for themselves or need foreign help with a national issue. Hereby, Rowling robs them from their own voices by utilizing them for her meaning. This also emphasises the previous findings that Rowling mostly allocates power to herself as a mediator and narrator.

The final reason of the argument above connects to a supposed value of celebrity advocacy: amplification of cause by providing platforms of audiences (Brockington and Henson, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2012; Kapoor, 2012). Regarding the discursive practice of Twitter communication, the action of ‘re-tweeting’ certainly represents the purpose of (re-) distribution. By sharing other users’ tweets, Rowling provides a significantly bigger audience to them than their original publisher. In the sample, Rowling’s re-tweeting extends the reach of the tweet on average to around two hundred times its original audience (the number of followers the respective account has).

In conclusion, by answering RQ3 (How do the characteristics of J. K. Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting correspond with the sociocultural practice of celebrity advocacy?) the final step of this analysis reveals that the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets correspond widely with the discussions of celebrity advocacy as a sociocultural practice. The correlations exhibit the emphasis of self-presentation and performativity of the phenomenon. Moreover, the analysis of Rowling’s tweets in the light of celebrity advocacy connects their characteristics to Chouliaraki’s considerations about “utilitarian altruism” (2012, p. 11). The transfer of
Chouliaraki’s and Kapoor’s critique as a lens for this analysis reveals ideological notions and colonialist discourse in Rowling’s tweets. This links back to Rowling’s power allocations examined in the previous chapters, identifying the voice characteristics to cater the functionality of her tweets.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting. Following three research questions, I adapted the method of critical discourse analysis by Fairclough to serve the nature of Twitter as a social media platform and location for my research. Conducting the study by the adapted model, I was able to find the characteristics of Rowling’s tweets, relate them to the discursive Twitter practice, and find out how they correspond to the concept of celebrity advocacy. Consulting the concepts of spectatorship of suffering and celebrity advocacy proved to be a fruitful principle for the study because their discussions equipped me with reflexive and critical perspectives to approach Rowling’s tweet from. Moreover, linguistic input from Halliday catered the purpose of the analysis well.

Answering the three research questions, the findings show that Rowling’s tweets are characterised by dialogue and exploitation of voices. While the discussion of these characteristics in the light of the discursive Twitter practice puts them into perspective and reveals some practical causality, it goes to show that Rowling utilizes the visualisation of authorship and dialogic nature of Twitter in an orchestrated, persuasive manner. Furthermore, the practical relation of Rowling’s tweets shows her strategically constructing distance and proximity for authenticity and self-presentation in different discourses. Rowling’s tweets are also characterised by othering, which serves her discursive constructions of distance and proximity, authenticity, and allocations of power. Moreover, her tweets are characterised by notions of universality and representation because the author positions herself as a narrator and in the speaker role. With the help of the consulted concepts, Rowling’s tweets could be related to the typologies of “The Social Media User as a Critical Observer” (Mortensen and Trenz, 2016, p. 353) and “utilitarian altruism” (Chouliaraki 2012, p. 11). These relations stress Rowling’s tweets in the light of colonialist discourse, cultural superiority, and self-presentation on social media. Ultimately, this study reveals that Rowling’s tweets exhibit a highly mediated
form of celebrity advocacy empowered by the practical circumstances of Twitter as a social media platform.

Since there is only scattered research about the respective issues, this thesis contributes to the field of Twitter research and offers an example for the transfer of celebrity advocacy conceptualisations to the mediated communication that dominates today’s interactions. The study sheds light on discursive, practical, and sociocultural aspects of Rowling’s tweets and offers insight to her production and consumption of text and discourse on Twitter. The rough similarities of Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting and her usual Twitter practice suggest that some of the findings of this study could serve as hypotheses for extensive, further research of the phenomenon. Such research should then find out if the concrete claims made in this study are generalizable for Rowling’s tweets within a broader, overall context. Furthermore, my thesis stands as a plea to attend to Rowling’s authorship outside her novels.

An additional contribution the thesis makes is to highlight the compatibility of critical discourse analysis for Twitter research. The findings demonstrate a fruitful adoption of Fairclough’s model and strategy to go about such analysis on social media texts. My study should provide impulse for the continuation of this endeavour. Building on the findings of this study, future research should attempt similar analyses on celebrity Twitter practice. While the scope of this thesis did not provide enough space or time for me to examine the audience’s take on Rowling’s tweets, this perspective would shed important light on ideological and cultural decoding of her tweets. Furthermore, a comparative organisation of future studies on Rowling’s tweets would certainly bring forth attractive findings. Such comparative analyses could relate the findings to Rowling’s tweets reading her own charity, British politics like the Brexit, or her novels.

For society at large, the critical discourse analysis of Rowling’s tweets following and regarding the Parkland School Shooting promotes a cautious consumption of celebrity tweets in the given and similar contexts. It goes to show that reflecting upon the practical, discursive, and sociocultural layers of a tweet brings forth crucial understandings that transform the tweet’s impressions.
References

Academic References


Non-Academic References


